

Report to the Board of Trustees
John Hurley, Director of Communications
April, 2008

Let me begin with a question: how many of you take advantage of the *simple* technique known as RSS feeds (RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication) to learn what's new on the frontpage of the uua.org website or in our weekly *uuworld.org* publication? Those of you who do so would have been alerted to such recent uua.org frontpage news as the Rev. David Pettee's moving narrative of his ancestors' involvement in the slave trade and how his genealogical research led him to approach the family of one of those slaves; or a five-part series on the history of Unitarian Universalist engagement in the historic and ongoing struggle for reproductive choice; or the story of how a UU congregation changed its name to honor Don Speed Smith Goodloe, the first African American graduate of Meadville Theological School.

uuworld.org now offers four separate RSS feeds: one for its latest weekly news stories, one for its weekly round-up of media articles about UUism, one for its GA blog each year, and one for its newest feature, "The Interdependent Web," a weekly blog about what's going on in the vibrant world of the UU blogosphere. Subscribing to a RSS feed is *really simple*: just click on the RSS links you can find on the frontpage of uua.org or *uuworld.org* and you'll receive a message every time new content is added to these locations. I encourage you to do so.

Also on the technology front, we recently purchased the domain name *uuabookstore.com*. Eagle-eyed readers will notice that the actual address of our new Bookstore website is www.uuabookstore.org (not dot com), but we purchased the dot com address for two reasons: so that anyone who inadvertently types in the dot com address as opposed to the dot org address will automatically be redirected to the Bookstore website, and so that no one could maliciously set up a rival bookselling operation at the uuabookstore.com address and siphon off customers who intended to visit our online Bookstore.

In January I wrote to you of our efforts to assist congregations and religious professionals in the creation of dynamic worship services by simplifying the copyright permission process through a relationship with LicenSing Online, Inc., a copyright clearance organization. Initial reaction from copyright holders has been encouraging, but we need to have more of the copyright holders of music and lyrics from our hymnals sign up with LicenSing to make this a viable enterprise. I'll keep you informed of progress on this effort.

Spring provides many opportunities for us to raise a liberal religious voice on issues in the public arena. Members of the communications staff group have recently been involved in publicizing Bill Sinkford's participation in the Interfaith Witness for Peace in Washington, DC, and the *Our Whole Lives* curricula within the context of comprehensive sexuality education. And as I write this, we have just signed on as supporters of Investors Against Genocide, a campaign aimed at getting investment firms to cease investing in companies that abet genocide, especially in the ongoing crisis in Darfur.

2009 is an election year for the UUA, and we have begun to implement the communications policies regarding the publicizing and coverage of the elections that you reviewed and affirmed at your October 2007 board meeting. You can find these policies at <http://www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/elections/policies/index.shtml>, and preliminary coverage can be found in several places on [uua.org](http://www.uua.org) and [uuworld.org](http://www.uuworld.org).

As always, if you have any questions about these reports or the work of the communications staff group, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Office of Information and Public Witness
Janet Hayes, Public Relations Director
April, 2008

In 2008 the Office of Information and Public Witness has been working to develop more public relations resources for congregations. We're putting together materials to teach lay leaders how to plan newsworthy social justice events and to write effectively for their local newspapers. Our online Public Relations Manual (http://www.uua.org/documents/info/pr_manual.pdf) includes extensive resources, but it's a big handbook that covers a lot of ground. As more congregations develop communications ministries and master the basic concepts in the manual, they can benefit from task-specific tool kits that focus on specific projects. To this end, we've been using recent samples of news coverage from highly visible congregations to create materials to teach specific media skills— writing press releases, drafting op-eds and letters to the editor, and using congregational blogs and websites as primary outreach tools.

In a related effort, Janet Hayes is working with Communications Director John Hurley and Florida District Executive Kenn Hurto on plans for a media training workshop for our ministers in the Ft. Lauderdale, FL, area in advance of General Assembly. We're also planning new trainings for UUs in key regions and working with local clusters and affiliates on promoting public witness issues that have potential for high visibility.

The IPW staff is creating new materials for the Coming of Age "Heritage Trips" to Boston, which began a few weeks ago. Sabe Graham, our Public Information Assistant, is the Association's primary liaison to youth and adults visiting from over 50 congregations between now and July. We're working very hard to provide our youth with additional support and hospitality in the wake of recent changes in the Association's youth programming. Members of the Stewardship and Development team are valued partners in this important work.

The office has been promoting Bill Sinkford's congregational visits and working with congregations to advance this work. We have three goals when we partner with a minister or communications committee: 1) to promote Bill's visit and shine a spotlight on the work of the congregation, 2) to build a relationship of trust and service with the congregation, and 3) to use the opportunity to provide one-on-one training in public

relations work for the minister and lay leaders. We believe this last goal is important, because well-trained and confident local spokespeople will continue to put their media skills to work long after the president's visit is over.

We were very successful in helping promote the UUA's 2007 national marketing efforts, securing coverage in the last quarter in several publications. Our press release about the college football bowl game program ads was covered by Religion News Service, who filed a piece that was picked up by several papers around the country, and a full-page *Chicago Tribune* story on our marketing and advertising was syndicated and carried by more than two dozen regional papers. This was "earned" (i.e., non-paid) coverage that greatly extended the range of the campaign, adding hundreds of thousands of impressions to those reached by paid advertisements.

Current projects the IPW staff is supporting include: the Tampa area regional marketing campaign, the launch of the Young Adult OWL curriculum, March for Peace actions in Washington, DC, and around the country, and Earth Day events in April.

Office of Electronic Communication

Deborah Weiner, Director of Electronic Communication

April, 2008

In January, I wrote to you with updates on our continuing content migration to the new UUA.org website. This project is nearly complete: many new materials have been added to the website over recent months, including General Assembly and news stories from 2000 on, and most recently, religious education materials. These materials are now awaiting quality assurance review and will soon be published. We continue to make improvements to the website. One example is RSS feeds, (RSS = "Really Simple Syndication") which will soon be offered to content providers, allowing them to deliver their content automatically to constituents who sign up for the feed. We already offer RSS for our news stories (see <http://feeds.feedburner.com/uua/Lxnn> for more information) and *uuworld.org* offers several RSS feeds as well (<http://www.uuworld.org/about/rssfeedsfromuuworld.shtml>).

Other updates:

- The UU Funding Program is "moving" to the UUA website. Rather than visiting a site separate from UUA.org, you can find information about UUFPP here. See <http://www.uua.org/giving/fundingprogram/index.shtml> .
- The UUA election website is live. This site has been established to provide accurate, up-to-date information regarding the upcoming UUA elections for President, Moderator, and Financial Advisor (June 2009), as well as rules, policies of the UUA Board of Trustees regarding the election, and links to the websites of announced candidates for President, Moderator, and Financial Advisor. See <http://www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/elections/index.shtml> .
- From January through the middle of March, UUA.org has featured a series of stories on reproductive choice issues. Beginning with profiles of crusaders for

choice from earlier times, we've progressed on to tell stories about Our Whole Lives (featuring the new OWL for Young Adults – see <http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/101131.shtml>) and the SEAT (Sexuality Education and Advocacy Training) program being held in Washington, D.C. (<http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/102132.shtml>) to call attention to this important subject.

- This spring we'll be focusing on a new Google Adwords campaign, in partnership with our Office of Congregational Services, to bring UUism to more people who "never knew a faith like this existed." Given the promising results of our test campaign in the winter, we're excited to return to this cost-effective form of promotion for Unitarian Universalism.
- Julie Albanese, Assistant Website Director, will be going on sabbatical in early April (the second part of her sabbatical) and will return to work at the end of May. As always, the Office of Electronic Communication continues to be committed to providing quick and friendly web services and customer assistance. Please email web@uua.org for help.

Finally, we're deep into planning for our General Assembly web coverage. We will again offer streaming of major events (plenaries, opening/closing celebrations, Ware Lecture, Sunday Worship, worship services held immediately before or after plenary events). We still have openings for a few terrific writers or editors to join this year's web team. The perks include free GA registration, a much-coveted GA Webworkers' T-shirt or baseball cap, the chance to bring General Assembly to UUs and people of faith around the globe, and of course, all the junk food you can eat! If you know of someone who might be qualified and interested, please encourage them to contact Deb Weiner, OEC Director, no later than April 15: dweiner@uua.org .

Periodicals Office

Chris Walton, Editor

April 2008

The Periodicals Office has signed a new **printing contract**. *UU World* and *InterConnections* will be printed by Royle Printing in Wisconsin starting in May. The new contract offers modest savings in production and in postage, but another (very slight) **periodicals postage increase** from the U.S. Postal Service goes into effect in May as well.

UU World's web magazine, uuworld.org: *liberal religion and life*, launched a new blog in February. "The Interdependent Web" offers weekly highlights from the UU blogosphere and other independent online media. Visit uuworld.org/blogs/web/, or visit the magazine's blog page at uuworld.org/blogs.

UU World and uuworld.org have covered several stories about **denominational issues** in the last three months. News coverage about the photo ID requirement at the Florida General Assembly appeared online December 14 and February 1 as well as in the Spring

issue of *UU World*. News about changes in the UUA's support for C*UUYAN and YRUU appeared online February 18 and 25. Profiles of the two declared UUA presidential candidates are scheduled for publication online March 17. (The Summer issue of *UU World* will include the candidate profiles and updated stories about youth and young adult programs.)

UU World reaches 126,000 households. Our weekly web magazine, uuworld.org, is averaging 900+ visitors a day (up more than 100 over last quarter) and now has more than 2,100 email newsletter subscribers. We invite you to sign up for uuworld.org's **weekly email newsletter**, which highlights each week's news and other content. Visit uuworld.org/subscriptions/emailnewsletter.shtml.

Publications and UUA Bookstore

Patricia Frevert, Publishing Director

April, 2008

Skinner House Books

For the twelve months ending in February 2008, Skinner House sales were \$324,249 -- up 6% from the same period one year ago.

New and Upcoming titles from Skinner House:

Wrestling with Adulthood: UU Men Talk about Growing Up, edited by Ken Beldon. Seven UU men share their personal stories. \$15 (February 2008)

The Cambridge Platform: Contemporary Reader's Edition, edited by Peter Hughes. The foundational 17th-century text, with modernized spelling and punctuation for contemporary readers. Includes introduction by Alice Blair Wesley. \$8 (March 2008)

Sonata for Voice and Silence, 2008 UUA Meditation Manual, Mark Belletini. More than 50 elegant prayer-poems that call us to "a tender silence emblematic of health, wholeness, communion, care and humility." Belletini is senior minister at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, Ohio. \$8 (May 2008)

Uncommon Community: One Congregation's Work with Prisoners, John Speer. Members of the H.D. Thoreau Congregation of Fort Bend County, Texas, launched several programs in which they worked with prisoners. Speer describes how they set up these programs, what worked and what didn't. \$14 (May 2008)

A Child's Book of Blessings and Prayers, Eliza Blanchard. Graces, prayers and blessings from Hindu, Sioux, Islamic, Jewish, Christian and Unitarian

Universalist traditions, to name only a few. Illustrated in full color.
Hardcover. Ages 4 and up. \$12 (June 2008)

Going Out Dancing: Poems, Ric Masten. New and previously published poetry from troubadour and folk singer Masten, best known for the popular hymn "Let It Be a Dance." This collection reveals the poet's humor as well as his unflinching look at living with a terminal illness. \$12 (June 2008)

Coming Soon from Skinner House (titles, prices and pub dates are not final):

Memoir, Mark Morrison-Reed. The author looks back on integration, black radicalism and the racism he experienced as young boy in Chicago, and as a youth growing up away from home in Europe. Includes the Civil Rights era, the call to ministry, being an early black UU minister, and interracial marriage and family. Throughout, he relates his own life to the experiences and character of his parents and ancestors. Eventually he comes to confront his anger and feel whole. \$18 (October 2008)

UU Family Songbook, edited by the UU Musicians Network. 25 of the most popular and accessible songs from *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey*, in simple arrangements and larger format. For home, religious education and intergenerational worship. 56 pages. \$14 (October 2008)

UUism for Newcomers: A Primer, edited by Patricia Frevert. Presents common prayers and readings, brief history, quotable quotes and glossary, plus introductions to stewardship, religious education and social justice. 48 pages. (November 2008)

Earth Day: An Alphabet Book, Gary Kowalski. Celebrates the earth and all living things, from A to Z. Illustrated in full color. Hardcover. Ages 4 and up. (March 2009)

For more about these and other Skinner House titles, see the UUA Bookstore website:
<http://www.uuabookstore.org/>.

Skinner House in the Press

A review by Thom Belote of Wayne Arnason and Kathleen Rolenz's worship guide, *Worship That Works: Theory and Practice for Unitarian Universalists*, was featured in the March 1 issue of the *UUMA News*.

UUA Publishing

Chalice Stickers. 120 stickers, 1 ½ in. square. \$7.00 (April 2008)

UUA Bookstore

Sales

For the twelve months ending in February 2008, Bookstore sales were \$1,203,266--down 6% from the same period one year ago; the downturn is still due to falling sales for *Singing the Journey*, the hymnbook supplement published in June 2005.

New Items in the Bookstore

Revolutionary Spirits: The Enlightened Faith of America's Founding Fathers, Gary Kowalski. Examines how Franklin, Washington, Paine, Adams and Jefferson tied their nature-based spirituality to their fascination with science. (BlueBridge) \$22.00

Getting a Grip: Clarity, Creativity, and Courage in a World Gone Mad, Frances Moore Lappé. Affirms readers' intuitive knowledge that it is possible to stop grasping at straws and understand the real roots of today's crises—from hunger and poverty to climate change and terrorism. (Chelsea Green) \$14.95

Handbook for the Spirit, edited by Richard Carlson and Benjamin Shield. Collection of original writings by The Dalai Lama, Shakri Gawain, Huston Smith, Rabbi Harold Kushner and many others. (New World Library) \$14.95

Coming of Age Around the World: A Multicultural Anthology, edited by Faith Adiele and Mary Frosch. Twenty-four stories from around the world chart the global quest for identity. Features voices from every continent, including Ben Okri, Chang-rae Lee and a variety of authors who are renowned abroad. Includes fiction, memoir, graphics and lyric prose, as well as tales in pidgin and patois. (New Press) \$16.95

New Bookstore Catalog

The 2009 UUA Bookstore Catalog, featuring nearly 100 new titles, will be mailed in May.