



FOR LEADERS OF UU CONGREGATIONS

INTER Connections

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InterConnections to Use Shortened Web Addresses

Online, this issue links directly to all resources; visit uua.org/interconnections. On paper, we're trying short links called TinyURLs. Rather than print long links like uua.org/aboutus/governance/boardtrustees/youthministry, we're printing short links like tinyurl.com/2lp3hl that will take you to the right resource.

Antiracism Conference Planned for February

An antiracism conference, "Leading Congregations into a Multiracial, Multicultural Future: Now is the Time!" is scheduled for Feb. 22-24, 2008, in San Jose, Calif. The conference will help Unitarian Universalists build just and inclusive communities. The first conference by that name was held in February 2007 in Arlington, Va. This second conference is designed to build on the success of the first.

A DVD and discussion guide from the 2007 conference can be ordered for \$5 from Diane Martin, UUA, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108. Contact congservices@uua.org, 617-948-6461 for more information. Registration and conference details are at uua.org/events/multiracialmulticultural.

IN THIS ISSUE

4 NOURISHING THE SPIRIT

Small Groups Lend Support During Challenging Times

5 MONEY

A Rousing Music Ministry Involves Whole Church

6 TOOLBOX

Publicity Comes to Those Who Help Make It Happen

7 MEMBERSHIP

(Un)welcoming Churches: How Do Visitors See Us?

LEADERSHIP

Involve Whole Church For Vital Youth Ministry

Five years ago there was no organized youth group at First Parish in Watertown, Mass. This year there's a group of eight. For a church with 115 members that's no small feat. It happened because of the persistence of Director of Religious Education Roberta Altamari, a congregation that made a commitment to youth, and youth who discovered the value of spending time with other UU youth.

At the 950-member UU Church of Arlington, Va., there are 40 youth who participate regularly in a youth group and other activities. There are 60 to 70 others on a mailing list, many of whom come occasionally. The youth group meets on Sunday morning. Each year the 8th-graders work through the Our Whole Lives (OWL) comprehensive sexuality curriculum while 7th-graders do the Coming of Age program. On Saturday night the junior youth group meets, and there is another OWL course, this one for 11th- and 12th-graders. There are eight youth advisors and 20 other adults leading youth programs.

Two congregations, two different paths toward making youth ministry a vital part of congregational life. Ministry to youth has become a major focus of the UUA, which just completed a three-year study of the topic. The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth involved thousands of youth and adults in meetings across North America. Its final report, with more than 60 recommendations, went to the UUA Board of Trustees in October. Now the board and UUA staff are working to determine how to implement those recommendations.

A shift is occurring in the way the UUA and congregations regard youth.

As the Consultation report notes, "There is a widespread desire to shift our community's thinking from youth programs to youth ministry."

Arlington's Director of Youth Ministry Andrew Mertz explains how he sees it: "Ministry to and with youth is a comprehensive approach to fulfilling the needs youth have that can only be provided in a church community. The youth who come to our congregations are looking for the same things as adults—spiritual growth, community, social action, identity, celebration, and worship. Youth programs tend to be focused on a specific event. Youth ministry is more about the relationship we are in with each other as we live our lives."

Sara Eskrich, a UUA youth ministry associate who helped facilitate the Consultation process, adds: "We're looking at a real definition of ministry. Many of our congregations have had a certain door for youth on Sunday mornings—the youth group door. We'd like to encourage congregations to really welcome youth into the front door of the church and to involve youth on committees, in choir, on the governing board, and in social justice and worship."

When Altamari became DRE at Watertown, the youth program had declined, she says. Some parents were requiring youth to stay through the eighth grade and then they dropped out. Some left before that. To build a youth group, Altamari started in the lower grades. "If your third-through-fifth-graders are bored they won't stay past the point they don't have to. We are working hard to make the curricu-

Continued on page two



INTER Connections

MISSION

InterConnections aims to be relentlessly useful to lay leaders of Unitarian Universalist congregations and the professional staff who work with them, providing information and resources that help make congregations vital.

InterConnections is a joint service of the UUA's Congregational Services, District Services, and Communications Staff Groups. It is made possible by congregations' Annual Program Fund contributions and the generosity of individual Unitarian Universalists to the UUA.

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Continued from page one

la more engaging so that we wouldn't lose those kids. If you can get them to stay through Our Whole Lives and then the Coming of Age year they will bond and probably continue into the youth group."

For a couple years there were no youth for a youth group at Watertown. But there were two middle schoolers: Cody and Giles. Altamari helped them stay connected at First Parish by designing individual projects for them. "People joked that it was my pet project to keep these two boys," she says. She created a program of art coupled with UU principles. Individuals in the congregation did woodworking, fabric painting, photography, quilting, and other projects with them. In the absence of other youth their age, Altamari sent them to First Parish, Cambridge, for the OWL and Coming of Age programs.

Another idea that paid off was that although they did Coming of Age at Cambridge, their mentors were Watertown members selected by them. "That helped keep them connected to the Watertown community," says Altamari. She then introduced them to district youth events where they connected to other youth and discovered the world of Unitarian Universalism outside First Parish.

And then last spring, the work and persistence paid off. Five other youth came of age and a real youth group was formed. The youth love it so much that they are starting to invite friends to join them. They're doing fundraising projects, district leadership training events, inviting adults for "popcorn theology" movie nights, and planning worship services and recreational events. "It takes time and patience to create a youth group," Altamari says. "It can take years of work. You have to take a vested interest in every youth. Start with what you have and it will grow."

It's essential, she says, that the congregation be supportive. "People here understand the value of a strong RE program." People suggest and do projects with the youth, and show support financially and by being friendly to the youth. Involving the congregation helps the youth feel like part of the church community. "Now, the only youth we lose are the ones who move away."

Both congregations conducted workshops to gather information for the Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth. Mertz says he relearned just how many different ways youth are stretched by various commitments. "I know it takes a lot for them to show up and offer something," he says. "We're able to appreciate that. We don't take our youth for granted."

Mertz offers this advice to other congregations trying to build a youth group: Find a good adult or a few adults, train them, make sure they are connected to the church and the wider UU community. Get the parents on board, and help them understand this is more than just another group—this is ministry. It is hard to deliver a complete experience, he says, without trained adults and engaged parents.

Once you have a group, Mertz says, work on drawing in outside resources to balance out the ministry with music, social justice, etc. Ask your minister to develop two services a year that speak to youth. "Don't put the burden of creating the whole youth experience onto the youth or the few adults who work with youth," he says.

Mertz says he feels rewarded when he sees he's made a difference. "I may not hear about it until two or three years later, that some little bit of wisdom ended up changing someone's life," he says. "I hear it once and know there are probably a dozen other stories like that out there."

"To me, being a part of a youth ministry that is affirming for our teens is the reward," says Altamari. "Seeing our youth putting our UU faith into action with the way they treat others and the projects they do is inspiring on many levels. I consistently hear in explicit and implicit ways from our youth and their parents that our youth ministry is transforming the lives of our teens in many positive ways."

RESOURCES

The final report on the Consultation To and With Youth, the Summit on Youth Ministry Report, and other resources for youth ministry are available online at tinyurl.com/2lp3hl.

Thriving Youth Groups Have Support, Leadership (InterConnections, October 2002): tinyurl.com/2k57ad.

Youth/Adult Collaborations Create Vital Youth Groups (InterConnections, Fall 2003): tinyurl.com/3xxz5v.



Forum

Two articles in the Fall 2007 *InterConnections*, one on how welcoming we are, and the other on cultural misappropriation, caught my eye. We UUs do a good job of welcoming Christian teachings. The Unitarian Universalist Association and our UU Christian Fellowship sponsored Kathleen Norris, Christian writer and spiritual guide, at our last General Assembly.

But if someone mildly Christian or even God-besotted visits us, will they be welcomed? If they have that same depth of love of God, for Christ, as Ms. Norris, will that person be cherished, supported, even tolerated among us? We may have a disconnect here.

We also seem to be sensitive to the sacredness of rituals that have powerful meanings to African Americans and American Indians, and we respect people of other cultures. We are careful not to change even a single word of their original texts, or at least without asking.

I'm not sure how we appropriated the most sacred moment of Christian worship, the Lord's Supper, Communion, or at least its title and approach into, firstly, a flower communion, and now a water communion. When we change the words of Christian hymns, do we take counsel with the Christians among us as to how appropriate these will be for our churches? When we write new materials, referring not to 'the spirit,' but 'the Spirit,' knowing that the upper case S is classically used in the Christian World to refer to the Spirit of God, do we run these by our own Christians? We may have a disconnect here.

—Robert Jordan Ross,
emeritus minister,
Tapestry, a UU Congregation,
Mission Viejo, Calif. (157 members)

Spread the Word

Don't worry about copyright: Feel free to make all the copies of *InterConnections* you want for others in your congregation. People can also read *InterConnections* articles in UUA.org's Leaders' Library or at uua.org/interconnections.

A Better Alternative

"When circumstances change, it is time to roll up our sleeves and do some problem solving. It's time to use whatever creativity and resourcefulness we have. 'Whose fault is it?' becomes not just an academic exercise, but a waste of time. In all of human history, mistakes are made. We say things we wish we hadn't. We do things we regret. One option is to condemn all humanity. A better alternative, to my way of thinking, is to figure out what to build next."

The Rev. Barbara Merritt,
in the 2007 UU Meditation Manual *Amethyst Beach*

Salary Ranges for 2008 Available at UUA.org

The UUA Board of Trustees has approved recommended salary ranges for congregational staff for 2008. The ranges, developed by the UUA's Compensation, Benefits, and Pension Committee, include a new congregational size: Mid Sized III (250 to 349).

More information is available on UUA.org. Go to tinyurl.com/36busb.

New UUA.org Active, But Old Site Still Useful

Having trouble finding what you need on the redesigned UUA.org? Information from the old website is still being moved to the new site, but it may be a matter of months before everything gets over there. Until then, if you can't find what you need on the new site, try visiting the old site, which can be found at archive.uua.org. Just remember that at some point the old site will disappear and everything will be on the new site.

Big Ideas Published For Small Congregations

Leaders of small congregations need the new book by the Rev. Jane Dwinell and Ellen Germann-Melosh, *Big Ideas for Small Congregations*. Dwinell is a small-church consultant; editor of *Small Talk*, a newsletter for leaders of

small congregations; and former consulting minister of a small congregation in Vermont. Germann-Melosh is a former UUA district executive and is a small-church consultant.

The book discusses the issues of all congregations: leadership, caring, money, facilities, staff, conflict, religious education, and more. It does this from the perspective of small churches, generally those with fewer than 150 members.

There is a discussion of the two types of small congregations: group-centered and leader-centered. There is also a section on starting a new congregation and one on how to determine if your congregation is attractive to visitors and how it can plan for growth. The book also includes resources, from websites to books.

The 184-page book is \$20 from spiritoflifepublishing.com or *Spirit of Life Publishing, PO Box 243, Montpelier, VT 05601*.

Joys and Sorrows

At the Anchorage Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Alaska, Sunday morning participants are invited to write their joys and sorrows into a book for that purpose. The service leader reads the messages aloud and then others are invited to light candles silently during a brief period of meditation while music plays.



Openness Encouraged From UU Committees

Congregational leaders wanting to keep up with changes and proposed changes within the UUA should know of the effort underway to create transparency in the actions of committees, commissions, and task forces, as well as the UUA Board of Trustees.

These groups are required to post agendas, minutes, and reports on UUA.org and to provide contact information. The Openness Implementation Committee, created by the Board in 2004 in response to a bylaw rule passed by General Assembly delegates that year, is working to create an understanding that complete openness and transparency are essential and make it an automatic part of how we conduct our business.

If you've looked for information from UUA committees and other groups but could not find it, please try again, says Openness Committee Chair Art Ungar of the Mt. Diablo UU Church at Walnut Creek, Calif. It is also helpful to let the committee know you're interested in what it is doing. Says Ungar: "Some committees have been slow to post their information because they believe that there is no interest. We try to explain that until potential users realize that information is available, they will not try to access it. Openness can encourage participation."

He adds, "When groups provide advance notice of meetings and promptly post minutes and reports, it provides opportunities for input on the issues on the agenda. This goes beyond supporting the democratic process. Openness and transparency are essential for countering oppression and establishing the trust essential for a healthy religious organization."

UUA President Encourages Partnerships

UUA President William G. Sinkford is asking congregations to consider partnering with Unitarian and Universalist congregations in many areas of the world, including India, the Philippines, Transylvania, South America, Africa, and Asia.

For more information contact Cathy Cordes, executive director of the UU Partner Church Council, at ccordes@uupcc.org or 781-275-1710, or go to the UUA Office of International Resources page at tinyurl.com/36y79v.

NOURISHING THE SPIRIT

Small Groups Lend Support During Challenging Times

When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita battered the Gulf Coast in 2005 the folks at the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge (354 members) became full-time caregivers. They not only provided nonstop aid to evacuees, they served as a clearinghouse for hundreds of volunteers from out of the area.

As the months went by and the demands of the recovery continued, church members needed a way to care for themselves and to process all that was happening. They found it in their Small Group Ministry covenant groups. About 60 percent of the congregation was in 20 of these groups, and they met nearly without interruption all through the recovery period.

"It was very healing," says Diana Dorrah, a group leader and UCBR's program director. "The discussions were intense and meaningful and complemented the work of our minister, Rev. Steve Crump, who was able to concentrate on Sunday morning services and healing for the people who packed our sanctuary at both services for many weeks."

Small Group Ministry has been beneficial for many congregations after national or local disasters, during major transitions and even during church conflicts, says Dorroh, who is also president of the UU Small Group Ministry Network, an organization that provides resources to congregations with covenant groups.

Athena Drewes is coordinator of the Goddess Theology group at the UU Congregation at Rock Tavern, N.Y. (56). The church building was destroyed by fire in September 2006.

She says the predominant sentiment in the group following the fire was relief that no one was hurt and gratitude that the Goddess group would continue. For three or four sessions members delayed previously planned discussions to talk about the fire.

"In the safety of the group they were able to process what UUCRT meant to each of them and in time what hopes and dreams they had for the new

building," says Drewes. "Much of the conversation was about the importance of the group, the gratitude that we have a place to meet, and the agreement that this is the most important part of their week. They were grateful for a group where they could feel continuity, ritual, and emotional/spiritual nourishment."

Dorroh cautions congregations to be mindful of certain procedures when discussing crises or traumatic situations. The guiding principle is just to discuss how the events are affecting participants' lives, and to keep the discussion away from politics.

She knows of congregations where covenant groups helped members cope with rough staff transitions. "You have to talk about it," she says, "because it's on everyone's mind. But you have to be intentional also." She adds, "We're starting to see that when a conflict comes to a congregation in which most members have been in a small ministry group, people treat each other better. They listen and respect each other's viewpoints more."

At the First Unitarian Congregation of Waterloo, Ontario (129), small groups are focusing this winter around the topic of "moving" as the congregation proceeds through a major transition period that includes a search for a settled minister, the sale of one building, and the purchase of another. "I'm asking everyone to share personal stories of making moves, and then we look at how these experiences impact the larger church move," says the Rev. Felicia Urbanski, interim minister at Waterloo. "I have advocated using the small groups as venues for alleviating anxieties in talking through concerns and issues that arise regarding the new space." She also recommends Peter Steinke's book, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What* (2006: Alban).

RESOURCES

The UU Small Group Network has many resources at smallgroupministry.net.



MONEY

A Rousing Music Ministry Involves Whole Church

If it weren't for music, many of us might not come on Sunday mornings. From the prelude through "Go Now in Peace," the choir pieces, and the closing hymn, music provides a ministry that combines with the spoken word and other elements to create a complete worship experience.

Yet developing a quality music ministry includes many challenges, from paying for it to recruiting choir members. Sarah Dan Jones knows where to start with all of that. "It's a matter of making people want to sing, making them active participants instead of spectators," she says.

Jones is music director at the Northwest UU Congregation in Sandy Springs, Ga. (150 members). She was music coordinator for General Assembly 2007 and will be again for 2008. She is also a music ministry consultant and secretary of the UU Musicians Network, the professional organization for UU musicians.

At Northwest she built the choir from 16 to 30 members and got the congregation more involved in singing. "When I first got to Northwest people didn't sing with enthusiasm," she says. They started an "ingathering" five to 10 minutes before many services during which Jones works with the congregation on two or three hymns, including some that people can sing without the hymnal. "If you ask people to sing and give them permission to do it, they'll sing freely," she says. "If you can get them to put their hymnals down and just sing from the heart then they'll start moving and clapping. And when you empower people to sing then they're better able to appreciate and support a music ministry."

Other tips: Hold an annual retreat for the choir. At a previous congregation Jones started a choir by organizing a Christmas caroling party.

Congregations need to pay music professionals responsibly. The professionals have to do their part, too, says Jones. "We've been working hard to educate our professionals to not keep

doing it for free, or if they do, to make sure the congregation creates a line item for music for the day when that professional retires."

Another challenge for music programs is classical vs. contemporary. "Churches need to include standards, such as 'Finlandia' and 'Rank by Rank,' but we need to go beyond that to attract younger families," says Jones. "Diverse music done well can be transformative for a congregation."

Catherine Massey is music director at the 200-member UU Church of Las Cruces, N.Mex. She started as pianist and now estimates she puts in about 20 hours a week as music director.

"My strongest advice is to find someone who is motivated and interested in helping grow a music program," she says. "If you can't pay a fair salary at the start you need to at least support their membership and participation in UUMN. At UUMN conferences they will get training and connect with a whole network of musicians."

Music is part of Las Cruces' social justice ministry. The choir has participated in a holiday service at a local shelter for homeless people in remembrance of those who died in the past year. Members of the congregation also sing holiday carols with inmates at a local prison. Last year the congregation provided an alternative service in the prison to the Catholic service.

Has music contributed to the congregation's growth from 140 members five years ago to 200 now? "It's been a significant factor," says Massey. "This congregation likes singing together, and the quality of that experience helps build energy. This congregation will sing anything I ask it to. That is one of the healthiest signs of a vibrant congregation."

RESOURCES

For help building music ministries contact the UU Musicians Network at uumn.org or 800-969-8866. For information on responsible pay for church staff such as music and choir directors, visit tinyurl.com/36busb.

Clean Bathrooms, Half and Half Create Warm Welcome

Tandi Rogers Koerger, program specialist for the UUA's Pacific Northwest District, developed a list of "Thirteen Steps to Start Your Church Year Strong." Here are a few of them.

1. Bathroom sniff test: Is your church bathroom up to "company standards?" I especially love those congregations that put out a basket of goodies like fragrance-free lotion, band-aids, feminine products, safety pins, diapers, and wipes.

2. Sound system: Respect your assembled community and the folks who lovingly put together the worship enough to make sure the sound system works seamlessly. Train a cadre of people who can work technical magic and can step in when needed. Practice using the equipment.

3. Greeters as ministry: Wouldn't it be great to be greeted at the door by someone who knows you by name and says, "How are you? I'm so glad to see you!" Blessed are the greeters who take special care with visitors. Remember your first day?

4. Name tags: They're a matter of hospitality and good manners. Another purpose is tracking. After church ask people to put their nametags in a basket. Your membership counter will know who attended.

5. Real cream: We are so into our free-trade organic coffee and usually fumble on the nasty powdered milk substitute. Spring for the real cream (or half-and-half). It makes a difference.

6. Search team of possibilities: Skip a couple Sundays and check out other churches. What good ideas could you bring back? I think it would be fun to have an organized team go out and systematically search for possibilities to share with their leadership.

About InterConnections

InterConnections is published quarterly and sent free to members of governing boards and professional staff of congregations. It is also online at uaa.org/interconnections. Sign up for email announcements when each new issue is online at lists.uaa.org/mailman/listinfo/interconnections-l.



Connecting Students In College Towns

Congregations that have sent young adults off to college can help them stay connected to their faith by notifying a UU congregation in that new location. Greeting cards for that purpose are available from the UUA Bookstore. Bridging cards are to be filled out by a youth advisor, religious educator, etc., and sent to the congregation nearest the college. The cards include contact information for the student plus ways to welcome that young adult into the new church community. A pack of 10 bridging cards is \$10. Item No. 1133 at uua.org/bookstore or 800-215-9076. Check the UUA Directory for congregation addresses. See also the August 2001 *InterConnections* article "Reach Out to Students with Food, Friendship," tinyurl.com/2swahw.

Spirit of Life Curriculum Explores Spirituality

"Spirit of Life," a nine-workshop curriculum for adults that explores spirituality for Unitarian Universalists, is online at uua.org/religiouseducation. Written by the Rev. Barbara Hamilton-Holway, "Spirit of Life" is the first electronically published curriculum in the new Tapestry of Faith lifespan faith development series.

The curriculum is based on the lyrics of Carolyn McDade's song, "Spirit of Life." Congregations are field-testing "Spirit of Life" this fall and it will be revised next year based on feedback. Congregations can tailor the workshop length, format, and enrollment to suit their needs.

News You Can Use On UUWorld.org

The online edition of *UU World*, which publishes new articles each week, has the following story of special interest to lay leaders:

The UU Community Church of Washington County in Hillsboro, Ore., installed an environmentally friendly parking lot, perfect for once-a-week heavy use. Neither the church nor its neighbors wanted an expanse of concrete. The church opted for Grass-Pave2, a special surface that has to be mowed, but eliminates most water runoff and satisfies the city's parking requirement.

Look for "Oregon church plants a parking lot" at uuworld.org.

TOOLBOX

Publicity Comes to Those Who Help Make It Happen

Carolyn Burleigh is always looking for ways to get First Unitarian Church of Portland's various ministries into newspapers or onto radio and TV. As director of communications and public witness for the Oregon church (1,095), it's part of her job to gain visibility for the congregation.

The congregation makes it easy by being so involved in the community that its actions are an easy "sell" to the media. In the past year, five of these actions have been the basis for significant stories in the local media. Last January First Unitarian had a service to mark the death of the 3,000th American soldier in Iraq. Senior minister the Rev. Dr. Marilyn Sewell wrote an op-ed piece on the war. The congregation was featured in a story during General Assembly there last June. And because Sewell had written another op-ed piece, which was not published, she was invited to contribute to a commentary about an exhibit called "Body Worlds," on the ethics of displaying preserved human bodies. The fifth story, this fall, was about the congregation's new building, which has environmentally responsible features.

Says Burleigh, "We anticipated that the death of the 3,000th American service person would be actively covered in the news. We created a media relations campaign around the timeliness of the event and our already planned social justice work. Because of that we were able to maximize TV, radio, and print coverage. Our peace service was covered by three local TV news stations, Oregon Public Radio, *The Oregonian*, and *The Portland Tribune*. "Our planning was integral to successful media coverage."

True, *First Unitarian* has more than 1,000 members and many resources, including a part-time director of communications. But it's not about size; it's about heart, says UUA Public Relations Director Janet Hayes.

To get noticed, "Get out into the community and do social justice work," she says. "Don't try to invent ways of marketing yourself . . . follow

your mission. Live out our UU principles and there will be enough to write about."

The following will help, she says:

- Put all of your social justice commitments on your website. "That's the first place a reporter looks," says Hayes. "Many websites have too little information." This is the place for board resolutions on marriage equality, the reports of public witness events, and any letters to the editor. "It's also a good place for a simple statement of what Unitarian Universalism is."

- Be proactive. Think about upcoming anniversaries and news events; plan events around them and send notes to news directors inviting them to contact you for a liberal religious perspective on these issues.

Before a reporter arrives to do a story, leaders at First Unitarian gather to discuss talking points and the message they want to put out. "We think about what we want to say before the time comes to actually say it," Burleigh says.

Think positively, says the Rev. Gregory Stewart, senior minister at the First UU Society of San Francisco (467). "As UUs we don't articulate what we believe in enough and with enough enthusiasm. At our church we believe that everything about our faith can change lives and ought to be on the front page. . . . When reporters realize we are serious and we're willing to talk about our faith, they call us. They often hear mostly from conservative churches. They want and need a liberal perspective."

He says the first thing he does when he moves to a new congregation is to introduce himself to the news media. "I promote who we are and find out what they know about us. They're pleasantly surprised a minister would do that and they remember us."

Practice sound bites, he says. "Listen to how newsmakers speak. Pay attention to the issues that impact your members directly—war, marriage equality, the economy—and go to the press with your perspective on those issues."



MEMBERSHIP

(Un)welcoming Churches: How Do Visitors See Us?

Editor's Note: *In the previous issue we reported on a "Mystery Worshipper" program operated by one UUA district. In this issue a president of one of our congregations reports his experience visiting another UU congregation.*

Recently I was traveling to a large city and took the opportunity to attend services at the closest UU congregation. As a board member and congregational president, I look forward to visiting other congregations when traveling.

I arrived 30 minutes prior to the service to have some coffee and chat with the local people. A membership committee member met me at the church entrance and gave me a different color nametag, which I was told would identify me as a visitor.

I followed my nose to the coffee area and walked the length of the large room, where coffee and fellowship abounded. Upon getting a cup of coffee, I began my mission to chat with like-minded souls and see how they did church.

To that point, no one had looked at me. But, armed with a friendly smile on my face, a special visitor nametag, and a full cup of coffee, I wandered around a room filled with folks chatting and laughing with one another.

First, I worked a string of tables with easels, literature, and sign-up sheets. Since only two of the positions behind the easels were staffed, I spoke with one of them about what her easel was advocating. She quickly filled me in, and then without additional chatter, she turned back to the only other person behind the tables to continue their conversation.

At the beginning of the service, the board member making the announcements invited visitors and guests to meet with members of the church leadership after the service.

With anticipation of a new beginning, I went to the designated place after the service and found the leaders engaged in conversation—among themselves. It became obvious that it

was up to me, the visitor, to try to break up their chat clusters and introduce myself. I did just that, but found they were more interested in conducting church business with one another than in making an effort to welcome a visitor or potential new member.

The whole experience reminded me of the membership seminars held at UU University before General Assembly 2005. There, members of the Jefferson Unitarian Church of Golden, Colo., tried to teach us that every member of a congregation needs to be proactive in making visitors feel welcome. They also told us that church business should not be conducted during the Sunday morning experience.

Would I return to that church? Definitely not.

But as I reflected later upon my own home congregation and that Sunday morning experience, I thought: We are a lot like them.

I've been just as guilty as their leaders—many times! After that experience, I returned to my home congregation with great enthusiasm for improving our greeting of guests and visitors.

Being welcoming isn't hard. Look a visitor in the eye and tell them you're glad they've come. Help them find a seat and chat with them at coffee hour. Years later many UUs can still remember who greeted them on their first Sunday. It's a memory worth making, and if visitors take away one good memory they might overlook a cobweb in the bathroom or a glitch in the sound system. To ensure that your congregation is truly welcoming to visitors, share and discuss this article with others in your congregation.

RESOURCES

UUA.org has the following resource pages: *Hospitality and Belonging* tinyurl.com/2trqs9, and *Welcoming Our Guests* tinyurl.com/2wqcggy. You can also visit the UUA's Leaders' Library at uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary and enter the term "hospitality" as the keyword.

Nick Carter Keynote At UU University '08

The Rev. Dr. Nick Carter, president of Andover Newton Theological School, will be the keynote speaker for UU University, which will precede General Assembly 2008 in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Carter will speak on leading theologically diverse congregations and how congregations can interact with and have a positive impact on a theologically diverse world.

Carter will give two addresses and there will be additional sessions for participants to discuss how they can apply his lessons in their congregations and communities. There will not be workshops on topics separate from the keynote addresses.

According to his biography, Carter is committed to helping create congregational leaders "who can communicate with, work with, and care for people who think differently and pray differently." Andover Newton has developed a program in "Intercommunal Leadership." Watch uua.org/events/uuuniversity this winter and early spring for more information.

Ad Campaign, DVD Aimed at Visitors

The UUA is running ads in four issues of *Time* magazine this fall and winter. The ads began appearing October 15 and the final ad for the current series will run in the December 31 issue. The ads are funded in part by contributions from congregations that held Association Sunday events this fall. If contributions are substantial enough from Association Sunday, more ads may run in *Time* in early 2008.

Congregations that have not yet held Association Sunday events but would like to may still do so by emailing the UUA's Stewardship and Development office at associationsunday@uua.org or by calling 888-792-5885. For information about the advertising campaign go to uua.org/marketing. Find resources for welcoming visitors at tinyurl.com/2trqs9.

A 10-minute DVD, *Voices of a Liberal Faith*, produced by the UUA to help introduce visitors to Unitarian Universalism, was mailed to all congregations. Additional copies are \$5 each (10 for \$25), from Susanna Whitman, Congregational Services Staff Group, UUA, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108; 617-948-4270. Email Whitman at swhitman@uua.org.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In this feature we seek out answers to questions of broad interest, drawing on experts in congregations, the UUA, and elsewhere. To submit a question, write to *InterConnections*, 8800 Norwood, Leawood, KS 66206, or email interconnections@uua.org.

Q We're looking for videos to show to visitors and at newcomer orientations. What do you recommend?

A In connection with the current UUA national ad campaign, a 10-minute DVD titled, *Voices of a Liberal Faith*, is available. Copies were mailed to all congregations. More are available for \$5 each. See the story in the sidebar on page 7 of this issue for ordering information. *A Living Faith*, available from All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa, is a more comprehensive video series and is \$75. It is designed for a series of classes on Unitarian Universalism. Order it online from allsoulschurchstore.org.

Q I am unsure who should receive *InterConnections* at my congregation. Can you help me understand this?

A *InterConnections* is mailed quarterly to board members and staff of all congregations. Some other positions (listed below) are also eligible to receive it. Your church office is asked at the time of your annual meeting to update the list of people

who should receive *InterConnections*. The data is requested through the Congregational Elected Board and Staff packet that updates data for *InterConnections* as well as the UUA Directory.

If for some reason the updates don't happen around the time of the annual meeting, ask the office staff to do the following:

Go to dyn.uua.org/congregation. This page will ask for your congregation's ID number, a 4-digit number printed in the UUA directory with your congregation's directory listing. You will also need a password, which someone in the church office should have. When you're on the page titled Data Services for Congregations, about a fourth of the way down the page look for the phrase "View and Print CEBS List." Open and print out that page. Have the office staff add anyone who should be receiving *InterConnections* and delete those who should no longer receive it. Mail that page to the address listed there.

InterConnections is sent free only to members of the governing board and the staff of congregations, plus people in the following positions: Religious Education Committee Chair, RE-Lay

Volunteer, Adult RE-Lay Volunteer, Anti-Racism/JTW Chair, Denominational Affairs Chair, Finance Committee Chair, Membership/Growth Chair, Newsletter Editor/Outreach Committee Chair, Personnel Committee Chair, Social Justice Chair, Worship Committee Chair, Young Adult Programs Chair, Young Adult RE-Lay Volunteer.

When someone goes off the governing board or resigns from one of the other positions listed above, they are no longer eligible to receive a paper copy of the newsletter. They should be invited to view it online at uua.org/interconnections where anyone can view current and past issues of *InterConnections* and print out copies. Anyone can also sign up to be notified by email when each new issue of *InterConnections* is published.

Sign up for email notification or cancel your subscription at uua.org/interconnections. Adding a name to the *InterConnections* list can only be done through the church office. Also, there are no paid subscriptions to *InterConnections*.

Questions? Write to Sarah Lawrence Chapman at data_services@uua.org, 25 Beacon Street Boston MA 02108, or call 617-948-4616.



For Lay Leaders of UU Congregations

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