

Report to the Board of Trustees
John Hurley, Director of Communications
January 2009

The astonishing changes in how we communicate are reflected in the reports below from the offices of the Association's communications staff group. You can read how we now use communication vehicles such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Ustream to carry our messages to both Unitarian Universalists and the wider public. We advertise via Google AdWords and evaluate traffic on our websites using Google Analytics. Our audiences can subscribe to RSS feeds and can now listen to UU World articles on downloadable audio files.

But what has not changed is the careful attention to the language and messages transmitted by these new technologies. Our press releases might be disseminated in new ways, but they still have to be clear, forceful, and attention-grabbing. Our magazine articles and Skinner House publications must still be gracefully written and carefully edited. The quality of our communications remains extremely high no matter how those communications are distributed.

There are two items of interest that are not mentioned in the reports below. As you know, marriage equality has been at the forefront of our public witness work for many years, so the election-day passage of Proposition 8 in California was extremely disappointing. As part of our reaction to that event, the UUA took the lead in filing a petition with the California Supreme Court to overturn the results of the vote to enshrine discrimination in that state's constitution; the petition was drafted by San Diego UU attorney Eric Isaacson. You can read more about this at

<http://www.uua.org/pressroom/pressreleases/124125.shtml>

The Reverends Laurel Hallman and Peter Morales, candidates for the office of president of the UUA, participated in a forum as part of the New England Conference of Unitarian Universalists in Worcester, Massachusetts, in October. A complete transcript and video of the forum can be found at

<http://www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/elections/president/121758.shtml>.

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
January 2009

In the last quarter of 2008 the staff of the Information and Public Witness Office focused most of our energy on developing new resources for congregations. Our goal is to teach ministers and lay leaders to communicate more effectively, and to that end we're helping

them take advantage of new opportunities offered by social media. We're also developing short how-to materials and templates to use in promoting congregational initiatives.

Our work included promoting voter participation, raising the visibility of Bill Sinkford's Africa Pilgrimage, sharing news of World AIDS Day actions, and publicizing the new Young Adult OWL curriculum. We devoted considerable energy to supporting UU congregations around the country as they fought for marriage equality during the fall elections. In addition to a huge amount of anti-Prop 8 coverage in California, we've seen an increase in news stories about environmental and economic justice, and we expect to focus more of our efforts in that last area in 2009, as more congregations address financial hardships in their local communities.

Public Witness Specialist Shelby Meyerhoff has created two new public relations guides for publicizing green building projects and the calling and installation of new ministers. Shelby continues to add helpful materials to our growing archive of [new media resources](#). She also manages the UUA's rapidly expanding presence on Facebook and will be coordinating the RSS distribution of audio and video materials from the Association in the upcoming quarter.

Sabe Graham, our Public Information Assistant, has developed new materials for the Visitors section of uua.org and has revamped our information about the Coming of Age Heritage Trips to Boston. Sabe is working closely with congregational youth advisors and the UUA's Office of Youth Ministries to enrich the historical and theological educational experiences for visiting youth. One exciting new feature Sabe just completed is a photo slide show of artifacts at #25 Beacon Street. This [virtual tour](#) of UUA headquarters is a helpful preview for trip planners as well as a useful learning tool for those who aren't able to visit Boston.

Office of Electronic Communication

Deborah Weiner, Director of Electronic Communication

January 2009

In October, a group of UUA staff met to discuss the results of the OEC's website survey (conducted over the summer) with the goal of improving UUA.org's usability and user satisfaction. Many of the changes will be subtle; they will be tested over the next several months on a small group of website users and evaluated before they are implemented.

OEC, in cooperation with our colleagues in International Relations and Information/Public Witness, promoted web coverage of Bill Sinkford's recently-concluded pilgrimage to Africa. Staff created a special website (<http://www.uua.org/news/sinkfordafrica/>) and blog (<http://uupilgrimage.blogspot.com/>) to present audio, video, and commentary from the travelers. Information about the pilgrimage was sent out through the UUA's RSS feed and Twitter, and President

Sinkford offered three religious education classes, live from Africa, through use of Ustream technology.

One of the highlights of our fall activity occurred in the aftermath of the passage of Prop 8 in California. The UUA's Public Witness Team, with the participation of many UUs from around the country who sent in their marriage photos, created a video that affirms our commitment to marriage equality. The video was posted on the UUA website (see <http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/123809.shtml>) and YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nz8omkCTvQA>) and was publicized to the media. The YouTube video has been viewed nearly 9,000 times in the month since it was posted, and we've received many favorable comments and a 5-star rating from viewers!

A new Google AdWord campaign, undertaken in partnership with our Office of Congregational Services, is also focusing on marriage equality. The campaign is hoping to capitalize on the continuing attention being paid to the fight to overturn Proposition 8 and the recent *Newsweek* cover story, "The Religious Case for Gay Marriage" (December 15, 2008). Those who click on the UUA's Google ads will be taken to <http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issues/marriageequality/index.shtml> for further information.

We've just uploaded President Sinkford's 2008 holiday message to YouTube as well (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpBWFbkbAu4>). Remember that the UUA's "Channel" of videos is available on YouTube for subscription – allowing you to keep track of new UUA videos. To visit our channel go to <http://www.youtube.com/user/UUAElectronicComm>

Randy Pausch, a UU computer scientist and author who died in late July (see UUA.org's interview of Pausch, conducted shortly before his death, at <http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/117142.shtml>), was just named "Most Inspiring Person of 2008" by Beliefnet.com, the online faith website/community (see UUA.org's story on the honor at <http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/124733.shtml>). UUs around the world contributed to the online voting that led to the designation. See <http://www.beliefnet.com/Inspiration/Most-Inspiring-2008/index.aspx> for more information.

Finally, Julie Albanese, Assistant Website Director, is expecting her third child in the spring and has resigned her position in our office as of December 24th, 2008, to spend more time at home with her children. We wish Julie all the best after her eight years on the UUA staff. A search is underway to find a highly qualified candidate to serve as Website Manager. In the interim, Kasey Melski and our temp Andrea Fiore will continue to fulfill your website needs when you write to web@uua.org .

I wish you all the blessings of the season as we approach the shortest day of the year, and am buoyed by the hope that 2009 will be a year of celebration, even amidst challenges, for us all.

Periodicals Office
Chris Walton, Editor
January, 2009

The Periodicals Office is introducing two new services this quarter, even as we are looking for ways to cut spending.

UU World launched an **audio service** with the Winter 2008 issue, in conjunction with the UUA Office of Accessibility Concerns. Audio recordings of every article in the issue are now available online as professionally recorded .mp3 files, and can be played in a Web browser or downloaded to your personal computer for playback in an .mp3 player (e.g., iPod). The magazine is read by award-winning audiobook actor Dick Hill (a UU). The UUA's Accessibility Concerns office is distributing the recordings to visually impaired subscribers directly. Listen to the Winter 2008 issue at <http://www.uuworld.org/issues/audiorecordingswinter2008.shtml>. This project is experimental; please send feedback about the service to world@uaa.org.

Our weekly web magazine, *uuworld.org*, is preparing to accept **paid online advertisements** in FY2010. Text ads will be available in the magazine's weekly email newsletter and on the website; banner ads will be available on the website only. We are currently developing policies and rates, and expect to begin testing our advertising services in the spring.

Publications and UUA Bookstore
Patricia Frevert, Publishing Director
January 2009

Skinner House Books

Sales

For the 12 months ending in November 2008, Skinner House sales were \$294,466 — down five percent from the same period a year ago.

Board

Current members of the Skinner House Editorial Board are: Anne Bancroft, DRE, First Unitarian Society in Newton, MA; David M. Horst, Minister, First Parish, Malden, MA; Paula Cole Jones, Member of All Souls Unitarian, Washington, DC and JUUST Change Consultant; David Pettee, UUA Director of Ministerial Credentialing; Tracey Robinson-Harris, UUA Director of Congregational Services; Jan Sneegas, UUA Director of GA and Conferences; Erik Walker Wikstrom, UUA Director of Worship and Music Programs.

New Titles

Come Sing a Song with Me: A Songbook for All Ages, UU Musicians Network, edited by Melodie Feather. Twenty-five popular and accessible songs from *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey*, in simple arrangements and larger format. For home, religious education, summer camp, and multigenerational worship. Spiral bound. \$14.00

In Between: Memoir of an Integration Baby, Mark Morrison-Reed. A personal story that addresses the complexity of race and the process of healing. \$18.00

Welcome: A UU Primer, Patricia Frevert, editor. Introduces UUism to newcomers with prayers, readings, hymns, famous quotations, a glossary and short essays on UU history, religious education and social justice. \$5.00.

Coming Soon

Be the Change: Poems, Prayers and Meditations for Peacemakers and Justice Seekers. Inspiration for activists, with a foreword by Bill Schulz. \$12.00 (March 2009)

Be the Change: Poems, Prayers and Meditations for Peacemakers and Justice Seekers, Stephen Shick. Readings to inspire and sustain activists and others who are working for a better world. Draws on the wisdom and stories of activist heroes, both celebrated and obscure. (March 2009)

Heart to Heart: Fifteen Gatherings for Reflection and Sharing, Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins. Inspiration and tips for small group meetings on a single topic, including forgiveness, loss, nature, money and friendship. \$14.00 (April 2009)

Earth Day: An Alphabet Book, Gary Kowalski. Celebrates the earth and all living things, from A to Z. Illustrated in full color by Rocco Baviera. Hardcover. Ages 4 and up. \$12 (April 2009)

With or Without Candlelight: UUA Meditation Manual, Victoria Safford, editor. Prose and poetry by a variety of UUs. \$8.00 (May 2009)

The Arc of the Universe Is Long: Unitarian Universalists, Anti-Racism and the Journey from Calgary, Leslie Takahashi Morris, Chip Roush and Leon Spencer. Explores how the UUA has evolved as an anti-racist, anti-oppressive multicultural institution in the years following the Calgary GA resolution in 1992. \$24.00 (June 2009)

A People So Bold: Theology and Ministry for Unitarian Universalists, John Gibb Millspaugh, editor. Essays on social justice as theology and ministry, from Sharon Welch, Rebecca Parker, Paul Rasor, Thandeka, Victoria Safford, Marilyn Sewell and others. (date and price not set)

Skinner House in the Blogosphere

- Mommy Mystic gives *Aisha's Moonlit Walk* and *Meet Jesus* honorable mentions on her latest kids spirituality booklist, online at:
<http://mommymystic.wordpress.com/2008/12/08/book-list-introducing-young-children-to-world-religions/>

- Timeless Spirit Magazine offers a glowing review of *A Child's Book of Blessings and Prayers* online at:
<http://www.timelessspirit.com/JAN09/review4.shtml>

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

Other UUA Publishing

New Titles

Coming of Age Handbook for Congregations, Sarah Gibb Millspaugh (Lifespan Faith Development)

Tools for the religious educator of adolescents. Includes workshops for youth, small group ministry sessions for parents, social action projects and rites of passage. \$30.00

Coming Soon

Seven Principles Activity Booklets: Pictures, Puzzles and More, Terry Stafford. Seven booklets, one for each Principle, with four activities in each. Activities include mazes, hidden pictures and puzzles and can be done individually or as a group. Booklets have some words, but are appropriate for pre-readers. Author and illustrator Terry Stafford has RE background. Enough for 10 children; ages 3 to 6. \$14.00 (May 2007)

UUA Bookstore

Sales

UUA Bookstore sales were \$1,089,489 for the 12 months ending November 2008, down 11% from last year at this time. As with the rest of the country, our sales continue to be affected by the economic downturn.

New in the Bookstore: Books from Other Publishers

A Friendly Letter to Skeptics and Atheists: Musings on Why God Is Good and Faith Isn't Evil, David Meyers. Shows how skeptics and people of faith can share a commitment to reason, evidence and critical thinking, while also embracing a faith that supports human flourishing. (Jossey-Bass) \$16.95

Heart of Compassion, Meg Barnhouse. This new CD contains sixteen of Meg's favorite stories. (Barnhouse) \$15.00

Leading from Within: Poetry That Sustains the Courage to Lead, Sam Intrator and Megan Scribner. A collection of ninety-three poems from well-loved poets, each is accompanied by a brief commentary from a leader explaining the significance of the poem in his or her life and work. The contributors represent a wide range of professions including Vanguard Group founder John Bogle and MoveOn.org cofounder Joan Blades. (Jossey-Bass) \$19.95

American Transcendentalism: A History, Philip Gura. This narrative history gives a comprehensive overview of the variety of ideas, conflicts and individuals that constituted this movement. (Hill and Wang) \$27.50

Book Marketing News

- On December 5th the Bookstore hosted an Open House, getting the word out to local UU churches and the Beacon Hill neighborhood that we are here and open to the public.
- Google Analytics accounts are new to UUA Bookstore staff and Skinner House marketing efforts. Through daily analysis of web traffic and usage, we are better able to refine and tweak our web presence.
- The UUA Bookstore's Holiday Gift Guide has been promoted on the front page of uuabookstore.org, in e-newsletters and on the homepage on uua.org.
- Mark Morrison-Reed's speaking tour to promote *In Between: Memoir of an Integration Baby* includes seven events this fall (and the sale of more than half of the book's first press run) and another 10 leading up to and including GA.
- A profile of Morrison-Reed will appear in the upcoming issue of *UU World*, and a review of the book will appear in the upcoming issue of the UUMA newsletter.