

UUCOMMUNICATOR

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford

August 2008

Visit us at: <http://www.uuoxford.com>

e-mail: uuoxford@uuoxford.com

-----CONTENTS-----

DIRECTIONS FOR HOW TO FIND US
SUNDAY SERVICES FOR AUGUST
CONTACT INFORMATION FOR 2008-2009
UUCO BOARD
SUNDAY SCHOOL STARTS UP AGAIN!
WORSHIP WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITY
FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT
UUA THANKS UUCO FOR STEWARDSHIP
AMOS NETWORK STILL AT WORK!
NEWS FROM THE MID-SOUTH DISTRICT
EMAIL POLICIES/PRACTICES FOR UUCO
ANNOUNCEMENTS
NEWS FROM MEMBERS FAR AWAY
RESPONDING TO THE TENNESSEE
TRAGEDY
A CLOSING THOUGHT

-----HOW TO FIND US-----

1. Travel on College Hill Road towards Clear Creek.
2. At the intersection with Old Sardis Road, go past the stop sign and continue straight on CR 314 for 3.5 miles.
3. Turn right onto CR 198 (you should see a white sign saying "Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford").
4. Go .2 miles. UU Hall, a light-colored building with a trailer next to it, is on your left immediately past CR 145.

TUPELO GROUP: The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Tupelo welcomes visitors. They meet the first, second, third and fourth Sundays of each month at 11 a.m. in Temple B'Nai Israel, 1301 Marshall Street. Website: www.UUTupelo.org.

-----SUNDAY SERVICES FOR AUGUST-----

Our services start at 11:00 a.m. and childcare is provided.

August 3 - Storytelling

Noted storyteller Rebecca Jernigan will visit and share tales with us. Julia Rholes is the service leader.

August 10 - The Water Service

In our annual in-gathering program, we share where we have been and talk about where we hope to go this year.

August 17 - "Why I am a Universalist"

The Rev. Fred Hammond will join us to preach this sermon. He tells the story of John Murray, often considered the father of Universalism in America, and what we can gain from his message of universalism today.

August 24 - Open House

And religious education begins again! More details are forthcoming, and please read about RE in the article in this newsletter.

August 31- To be announced

We will send you the topic in our weekly service reminder.

-----YOUR NEW UUCO BOARD-----

Have a question about something UUCO related? Here are your officers, trustees and e-mail contact information:

President: Gail Stratton
byges@olemiss.edu

Vice President: Beth Boerger
boerger@olemiss.edu

Secretary: Susie Adams
sbadams@olemiss.edu

Financial Trustee: Paula Shanks
paulashanks@bellsouth.net

Sunday Service Programming Co-Trustees:
Sharon Walls
skwalls921@bellsouth.net
Anne Quinney
aquinney@olemiss.edu

Religious Education and Youth Co-Trustees:
Hans Sinha
hansps@mac.com
Susie Pedigo
spedigo@olemiss.edu

Communications Trustee:
Luanne Buchanan
lbuchana@olemiss.edu

Membership Trustee:
Shanna Flaschka
sflaschka@bellsouth.net

-----RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR-----

It promises to be an exciting year for religious education. Please read this letter from our RE Co-Trustees:

Dear Congregation,
We have an exciting RE year in front of us. This was clear from the annual RE potluck dinner at Hans and Sharon's house a couple of weeks ago. Parents and those interested in RE attended. After much discussion and good food we came up with a plan for this coming year.

Number of Children and Class Breakdown

We estimate we will have just under 30 children and youth involved in RE this year. We will divide the children into five groups based upon grade level: Pre-K, Lower Elementary (K through 2nd grades), Upper Elementary (3rd through 5th grades), Middle School (6th through 8th grades), and High School (9th through 12th grades).

Physical Space and Scheduling

The fact we are growing is good. However, in light of our limited space, it does present a problem in terms of scheduling. Thus, this year we are trying something new. The Pre-K, Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary groups will meet during the service as in the past. Pre-K and Lower Elementary will use the two classrooms in the main building while Upper Elementary will meet in the expansion building (also known as the trailer). Similarly, as they did last year, the High School youth group will meet off-site at some point during the week. Our fantastic High School group leaders, Ross and Skadi, will again lead this group. This leaves our Middle School group. Since we have no available room during the service for this group to meet, they will instead meet at 9:45 on RE Sundays. This will permit them to hold their RE class and then either participate in the service or to serve as teaching assistants in the younger RE classes. We are hopeful this will work out.

Theme for the Year

After much discussion, the consensus is that we should focus on one theme for the year. The hope is that this will provide some continuity to the children. This year our overall theme will be World Religions. We will divide the year into two segments. In the fall semester the focus will be on non-Western religions, while in the spring semester the focus will be on the Judeo-Christian tradition. We will emphasize common themes throughout as well as any overlap with the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism.

RE Coordinators

Each RE group has a coordinator. The coordinator is not the person who will teach every class. Rather, the coordinators will help ensure that the each group runs smoothly. They will seek to coordinate the lessons among the teachers, help the individual teachers select lesson plans, remind the teachers of their upcoming RE Sunday classes, and collect the class summaries (see below) from the teachers after each class. The following have volunteered to serve as coordinators for the coming year:

Pre-K: Susie Pedigo (513-6219,
spedigo@olemiss.edu)
Lower Elementary (K – 2nd grades): Laura
Boughton (236-4213,
lboughton@spsd.k12.ms.us)
Upper Elementary(3rd – 5th grades): Mary
Solomon (236-1151,
geesolomon@mindspring.com)
Middle School(6th – 8th grades): Paul Goggans
(234-8212, goggans@olemiss.edu)
High School: Ross Haenfler and Skadi Snook
(ross@olemiss.edu)

RE Teachers

As in the past couple of years, we expect to have a varied group of people volunteering to teach RE classes. We envision the teacher duties to include selecting a lesson plan and preparing for class. In doing so, the teacher should check with the class coordinator or the prior Sunday's teacher to see what has already been covered. We hope this will provide some continuity for the kids and enable us to stay on topic in terms of the chosen theme. The teacher should also contact the kids in their upcoming class to remind and encourage them to attend, and to get a realistic feel for how many kids will be in their particular class. Above all, the teachers should ensure the kids have a fun and worthwhile time at RE.

As mentioned above, we hope to ensure continuity in terms of what is taught throughout the year. With this in mind, we are asking that after a teacher has taught a class, he or she prepare a short summary of what was covered, what text was used, what chapters covered as well as what worked and what did not. This summary should then be forwarded to that RE group's coordinator. The easiest way might be to simply send the summary to the coordinator in an email. The coordinator will then collect all summaries and pass the information along to the upcoming RE teachers.

RE Teacher Sign-Up

We have several RE Sundays left to fill. If you are interested in teaching an RE class, or several RE classes, this year, please contact the coordinator

for the class/group you would like to teach. If at all possible, consider teaching two RE classes in a row with the same group. This should add to the continuity of the lessons for the kids. Some spots have already been filled, but we still require a teacher for the following classes and dates. Please review the open dates and classes below, select one that best fits you, and let the coordinator for your group know. We need to fill all the dates by the beginning of our fall RE season (August 24, 2008). We cannot do this without your help!

We need teachers on these dates for these groups:

August 24 - upper elementary (11:00 a.m.), middle school (9:45 a.m.)
September 7 - middle school
September 21 - middle school
October 5 - lower elementary (11:00 a.m.), middle school
October 19 - lower elementary, middle school
November 2 - middle school
November 16 - middle school
November 30 - lower elementary, middle school
December 14 - lower elementary, middle school

Children/Youth Participation in Congregation Service

To what extent can the children in the congregation services on RE Sundays? Children and youth are always welcome in the main service. On RE Sundays they will generally participate in beginning of the service. How long they will stay with the Congregation will depend upon the individual teacher and the particular order of the service. However, the opening words, the lighting of the Chalice and any beginning musical interludes should always be child-appropriate. If there is a consensus that we wish to involve the children and youth further with the services, on both RE and non-RE Sundays, we may want to consider changing the format of the service as a whole. For example, the announcements, which sometimes tend to be long and not too interesting from a child's point of view, could be placed at the end of the service instead of the beginning. Similarly, when there is a non-RE Sunday service that might be

particularly interesting for children, we might want to encourage child and youth attendance by involving the children and youth in the service. They could, for example, do an opening reading, pass the collection plate, or simply join in the singing. Any changes to the service format as whole will, of course, have to be debated and considered by the congregation as a whole.

Finally, thank you all. We are looking forward to a great RE year.

Hans and Susie P.

RE co-trustees

[Note from the editor: Please visit our web site, www.uuoxford.com, to view the complete plan/prospectus drawn up by this year's dedicated RE parents and supporters.]

----AUGUST WORKSHOP ON WORSHIP-----

Save the date! On Saturday, August 16, the Reverend Fred Hammond will present a workshop with us on creating a good worship experience. The workshop is entitled "Creating Sacred Space for Transformative Worship." Fred describes it this way:

"What is it about worship that inspires people to come back week after week? This workshop will examine the various components that make for great transformative worship services. There will be discussion on some of the theology and symbolism behind the placement of certain elements within the service. We will listen to each others experiences of worship both UU and from other backgrounds and add the insights shared to what makes transformative worship. And there will be some practice in putting together a worship service and in delivering portions of the service."

This is a tremendous opportunity and it will be happening right here at UU Hall! The workshop will run from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., and childcare can be provided.

If you can attend, please let Gail Stratton or Sharon

Walls know **by August 9.**

----FROM YOUR UUCO PRESIDENT-----

"Nurture your spirit, help heal our world."

This is the sign that was at the entrance of the convention center in Fort Lauderdale, Florida where the Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly was held, and for me, this summarizes so well what Unitarian Universalism is about and why I am so drawn to it. This reflects the inner and the outer focus of spirituality. I believe that as we find our deepest selves, we can move most effectively in the world. The world needs us... it needs our thoughtful analytical selves to address problems as well as our passionate and deeply focused selves to get those problems solved. The world desperately needs the clear and welcoming vision of liberal religion, a vision where people are free to find their own spiritual paths and the answers or the signposts are not predetermined. Using the title of Owen-Towle's book, we need to be "freethinking mystics with hands!"

In this coming year, there are many things I hope for at UUCO and all of them have to do with nurturing our spirits and helping to heal our world. This will be my last year as president of UUCO, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve as the president of this congregation!! One of the very important things that I hope we will do as a congregation is to work together to "set conditions of safety." Where people are safe, they can grow. If we want to nurture our spirits, we need to be safe to do so. That is true for children and adults; indeed it is true for all beings. One of the ways to do this is to talk about it. Another will be to develop a congregational covenant or an agreement of how we want to be together. Tragically, the recent shooting at the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church underscores the challenge of safety.

One of the business items the congregation will tend to this fall will be to change the bylaws to divide the Vice President job into a "Building Trustee" position and a "President-Elect" position. As it currently is written, the job of VP is the Building

Trustee as well as the President Elect, and we have had trouble filling the job as it is presently defined. Stay tuned for more details and plenty of discussion about this! As a small congregation, we take turns in leadership positions and I look forward to the next batch of leaders in our midst!

The Sunday Service Programming committee will be bringing a rich and varied series of programs throughout the fall and spring. Under the thoughtful direction of Sharon Walls and Anne Quinney, this very fine committee is seeking to present meaningful, interesting, inspirational and perhaps challenging programs. As a congregation, we celebrate diversity in our midst. Because of this diversity it may be tempting to seek the least common denominator of everyone and not offend anyone. If we did this, it probably would mean that we would never say anything of substance. We won't do this!! Instead, we will seek to provide rich and interesting programs with an eye to our diversity and ask that everyone be mindful that language that is meaningful to one person might need some translation by the next person. Through the variety of services and through thoughtful inclusion of music, readings, poetry and other expressions of our depth, we will seek to honor the diversity of the needs of people who come to UUCO.

We get to start this year with a visit from Rev. Fred Hammond, now of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Tuscaloosa. On August 16, Rev. Hammond will do a workshop for us on "creating sacred space for transformative worship." It will be for the afternoon and will give us time to talk together and find what things work best for us. This is for anyone who is interested. If you have ever thought you would like to lead a worship service or be part of planning one, please let me know and please come!

We are part of a "Shared Ministry" group with Rev. Hammond and several other Mississippi congregations. In addition to providing the service on August 17 and the workshop on August 16, Rev. Hammond will be providing (adult) Religious

Education discussion starters and also several sermons via DVDs over the course of the year. We are joining with other congregations to keep a UU minister in the state at least part of the time. Rev. Hammond keeps an interesting blog: <http://serenityhome.wordpress.com/>. It is entitled "A Unitarian Universalist Minister in Mississippi." Rev. Hammond visited us last fall and we are very happy to welcome him back!

The Religious Education Committee, with co-trustees Hans Sinha and Susie Pedigo, will be providing a dynamic and interesting program for nearly 30 youth! What an amazing group of people (both the youth and the adults who are involved with this)! It is clearly important that we provide this kind of RE in Oxford. It is also clear that our physical space is no longer adequate for the number of age groups and the number of children that we serve! Details of the age groupings and the curricula that will be used are provided in this newsletter.

The Green Sanctuary committee has met over the summer to develop a proposed action plan for the congregation. As much of the focus has been on the building and the needs of the building, we are also pursuing writing a Chalice Lighter grant proposal this fall. Over this last year, Charlene Dye has been a leader in getting us moving on becoming a Green Sanctuary. We are deeply grateful for her leadership and involvement and wish her well on her move to New York!

Clearly, there is a lot going on at UUCO; we are a vibrant and healthy community. In the midst of all this, and in light of the recent tragedy at the Knoxville Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, I hope very much that we continue to be welcoming to all and provide a place of rest and nourishment to all who seek us out.

The world needs us, and though it can be scary, we can be motivated by love instead of fear. To quote Owen-Towle from the book *Growing the Beloved Community*, "Our stubborn belief in the bedrock preciousness of individuals ought never be taken for granted; it is not shared in large portions of the

world, and it is frequently threatened by bigotry and intolerance here in America. It remains a distinctive, critical hallmark of our way of doing church.”

As we move forward this year it is my hope that we will grow in being a beloved community, nurturing our spirits and reaching out to a hurting world.

Gail Stratton, UUCO president



-----THANK-YOU FOR STEWARDSHIP-----

-Our congregation recently received the following thank-you from the Unitarian Universalist Association for our contributions.

“We are writing to thank you for your stewardship of Unitarian Universalism in Oxford, and for your full Fair Share contribution. We know that many congregations struggle with this contribution, and we know it is the hard work of the leaders of societies which make this possible. Thank you.

“We know that support within a congregation does not stop at the board level. It is the stewards sitting in the pews which make your budget possible, and that budget supports good works of Unitarian Universalism in the world. Together as an association, we can do more than we can do alone... Once again, thank you.”

Our congregation will be listed in the upcoming Annual Report on Giving as one of the Annual Program Fund Honor Congregations. This list is posted online and placed in the UU World magazine. Many thanks to all those in our congregation who give so generously!

-----AMOS NETWORK UPDATE-----

We’re grateful to Sharon Walls for keeping us posted on activities of the AMOS network. Here is their report on what they are doing and accomplishing in these hot summer days:

We would like to let you know what's happening with our Safe Public Space project in Western Hills. A very generous donor has offered a plot of land to the neighborhood for a park. An attorney from one of our member churches is donating his time to help with the legal details. The Amos Network and Western Hills Neighborhood Group are working together to provide a safe play space for the neighborhood children. As soon as the details are worked out, we will be coming back to you for help in raising money or volunteering time to help put this project together, so keep it close to your heart.

The Amos Network of Lafayette County Education and Financial Counseling Institute is looking to hire a part-time counselor for the Homebuyer Education Workshop. The applicant must have good credit, an AA or higher degree, and the ability to deliver information or instructions to a diverse group of individuals. In addition, they must have some knowledge and understanding of the home buying process and how credit works and affects everyday life. The applicant must also be able to use PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, and Excel, and have an ability to organize and maintain confidential records. Please contact Janice F. Carr at 231-1499 or by email at jfclegal@bellsouth.net for more information.

-NEWS FROM THE MID-SOUTH DISTRICT--

Have you wondered what the Mid-South District is? Please read the following from John Malluck of the Leadership Development Committee. He can be reached at john.malluck@comcast.net.

UNDERSTANDING OUR DISTRICT

The Mid-South District is one of the twenty districts that comprise the Unitarian Universalists Association.

These districts vary geographically in size and in membership. While the Mid-South District is one of the smallest districts, it is to our credit that our district activities and services equal those of larger districts.

We can see that Mid-South is not the smallest district in the UUA, but we are significantly smaller than our neighboring districts: Florida, Thomas Jefferson, and Southwestern.

More information about districts and our district can be found at www.msduua.org and www.uua.org.

In subsequent dispatches we will focus on the Mid-South District and look at membership and growth of our 33 district congregations.

-----EMAIL AT UUCO: RECEIVING IT, SENDING IT-----

As we embark on our 2008-2009 season at UUCO, we'd like to make sure that the e-mails you receive from us are the ones you want.

We keep a list for members only, related to congregational businesses and concerns internal to our congregation. We keep other lists that are open to members and friends, including a list for those who want it all: newsletters, service reminders, and notices about other events and news that may be related to our interests but not originating in our congregation. For members and friends who want to limit what comes into their in-box, there is another list that receives just the newsletters and service reminders.

Please let us know if you are not on the list(s) that you prefer, and we will make the change for you.

If you would like to **send** e-mail to any of our lists, you should write uuoxford@uuoxford.com indicating your wish to send a message and the intended recipients: members, members and friends, the board, and so on. You should send the message itself, as a second email if possible, in the

form in which you would like it to be sent. Please know that all messages are subject to editorial review and revision.

We want to make our email communications work for all. Thanks for your help!

-----ANNOUNCEMENTS-----

From a fellow UU, Jane Bell, of Des Moines, Iowa:

"I am a member of First Unitarian Church in Des Moines, Iowa. I am in Mississippi volunteering in a voter registration drive. We need many more volunteers throughout Mississippi. Knowing that UU's are highly likely to participate in efforts like voter registration, I am asking for your help. Aaron Luce is responsible for coordinating this drive. Anyone willing to volunteer, please contact Aaron at getluce@gmail.com or 443-536-1731. Thank you!"

And from the UU congregation in Tuscaloosa we received the following "ad" with fund-raising implications we can get behind!

Mississippi vs. Alabama Bed and Breakfast! Instead of a crowded hotel, make your reservations now for a wonderful Bed and Breakfast Weekend with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Tuscaloosa. Your \$100/night fee will be a donation to the congregation. Reserve your Ole Miss weekend on October 18 or Mississippi State weekend on November 15. Contact deborah.crocker@ua.edu, with "B&B" in the subject line.

-----NEWS FROM FAR-AWAY UU'S-----

We're glad to hear from Terry and Dinah Swan, who send us the following:

"UU's Elaine Gelbard and Dan Mattern recently visited Dinah and Terry Swan in Durango. You can ask them how it was. They may have photos of us. We continue to miss our UU friends. UU here is okay but we like the Oxford regime better. We were so sad to hear of Charlene Dye's

move to New York and I hope someone has taken on the green team she started. How wonderful of UU/Leah/etc. to help Charlene with doggie placement! Our address is 24-B Coalbank Drive: Durango, CO 81301.”

-----**STANDING WITH OUR TENNESSEE VALLEY UUFRIENDS**-----

The July 27 tragedy at Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church has created great pain and suffering. We thank Eunice Benton for news and suggestions to help us all, contained in this letter:

Dear Mid-South Friends,

All of us are saddened and shocked by the tragedy in Knoxville this past Sunday... and many congregations and individuals are looking for ways to respond and to help.. Monday night saw vigils and TV videos from across our district -- from Cookeville, TN, to Atlanta, GA, to Jackson, MS, to Huntsville, AL -- and more special services are scheduled for future days.

To learn about a number of ways to help and respond, visit the link below:

<http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/117156.shtml>

In addition, the UUA web site now has a page where you can post messages for those in the Tennessee congregations most affected by the incident:

<http://knoxvillesupport.blogspot.com>

And, a Knoxville Relief Fund has been established at this link:

<http://www.uua.org/giving/donatenow/117168.shtml>

Mid-South District's web site has a number of resources for this difficult time posted on the front page at <http://www.msduua.org>, and it will soon be updated to reflect the links above.

Lastly, the Mid-South Office will send some

special resources to members of UP! Teams in the UP! Program for small congregations.

Blessings to all, Eunice Benton

-----**NOTE FROM THE EDITOR**-----

Please let Luanne know of corrections and additions. You can reach her by phone at 234-3833, and at lbuchana@olemiss.edu,

We hope to send out our September newsletter on Friday, August 29. Please consider submitting an article!

Many thanks to this month's contributors: Eunice Benton, Susie Pedigo, Paula Shanks, Hans Sinha, Gail Stratton and Sharon Walls.