

# UUCOMMUNICATOR

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford  
December 2007

Visit us at: <http://www.uuoxford.com>  
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## -----HOW TO FIND US-----

1. Travel on College Hill Road towards Clear Creek.
2. At the intersection with Old Sardis Road, go past 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.

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**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](http://www.UUTupelo.org).

## ---SUNDAY SERVICES FOR DECEMBER---

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

December 2 - This I Believe  
Shanna Flaschka will be our speaker, with Terry Swan as the service leader.

December 9 - Community Voice: the Interfaith Compassion Ministry  
Where do you go for help when there is not enough to cover the mortgage or the electric bill? Where do you go if you cannot afford school supplies for your kids? Where do you go if you are homeless? In Oxford the answer is: go to Interfaith Compassion Ministry. Funded by churches, donations and the United Way, ICM helps over 85 people each month. Our speaker will be Lena Wiley, the longtime director of ICM. We will have a special collection to help this important ministry in town.

December 16 - Love Feast  
In what has become an annual tradition, Eunice Benton will lead us through an intergenerational service of appreciation for one another and the good we share.

December 23 - Holiday celebration

December 30 - Burning bowl service

As always, the Sunday Services Programming Committee would like to invite anyone who feels moved to act as service leader for even one Sunday morning service to contact Sharon Walls, Programming Trustee, via e-mail at [skwalls921@bellsouth.net](mailto:skwalls921@bellsouth.net).

## -----SUNDAY SCHOOL AT UUCO -----

Most RE groups haven't met for the past month due to the retreat and then the scattering of children to the four winds over Thanksgiving.

However, the kids who attended the retreat had a great time and got to know one another better, as did the adults. Thanks to all who made that happen!

The following folks will be teaching RE in December, according to age groups indicated:

**Pre-school group**

December 2 - Stevi W.; December 16 - Laura J.

**Lower elementary**

December 2 - Hans S./Sharon A.; December 16 - Mary S.

**Middle school or thereabouts**

December 2 and 16 - Susie A.

**----UUCO WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS----**

The congregation joyously welcomed eight new members on Membership Sunday in November. We plan to bring you new-member profiles in upcoming newsletters, beginning this month with one from Sarah Sheffield and another from Mary Solomon.

Sarah tells us: "After graduating from Mississippi University for Women with a BA in English and a BS in math, I came to Oxford in the fall of 2006 to begin my Master's Degree in Southern Studies. Last spring I returned to Columbus, MS to do an internship at the Southern Women's Institute at the W. When that was over I decided to return to Oxford to complete this degree. I found a job as a nanny for a (now) 20-month old little boy. I am living in Water Valley in a house on the family's land and taking a full load of classes. I will be finished with this program in May and I will be moving on to other things. At this point I am not sure where I will be or what I will be doing.

"My parents both live in Memphis where I grew up. I have one puppy, Gabrielle (Gabby), who is the light of my life. In my spare time (haha) I enjoy reading, writing, playing with my puppy,

cross-stitching, video and computer games, and watching movies. I think I finally realized that the most important part of life is the journey itself and I am striving to live with that as my central focus."

Mary tells us: "My family and I moved back to Mississippi in 2002 after living in Connecticut for 8 years. We have 3 energetic boys, William (9), Matthew (6) and Ross (3) who love being near their grandparents and cousins. I grew up in the small town of Carrollton and couldn't wait to leave. However, it took leaving and living far from home to realize how deeply I love the land and people of Mississippi.

"My passions in life are yoga, art, bike riding (road bikes) and anything outdoors. With three active boys we love spending as much time outdoors as possible hiking, camping, boating and just enjoying nature. I need to get more creative art time and am hoping to start an "Art Night Potluck" where people can get together in fellowship and create!"

**---UUCO DEDICATES NEW FRONT DOOR TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN LUDEMAN---**

At our November 25 service we recognized the enduring contributions of John Ludeman to our lives, in the very appropriate form of a new door to our church home.

The dedication reads: "In memory of John F. Ludeman, educator, naturalist, friend." Members and friends of the congregation were inspired to say more. Here we print a memorial to John from David Roederer:

A door

An exquisitely apt memorial for an open-hearted man such as John Ludeman.

Opening doors was an inherent element of John's life. Of John's unintended ministry.

He opened the doors of his students' minds, letting knowledge in.

He opened the doors of his heart to us who knew

him, revealing unrestrained friendship. He opened the doors of his experience to me, mentoring as a wise elder. The Unitarian minister A. Powell Davies said that life is just a chance to grow a soul. John had a mighty green thumb. He threw open the doors of that rich soul he'd nurtured to his beloved Anne, where it resides today, witnessed by the twinkle of lovingness shining brightly in her eyes. Pass through this door to grow a soul. Pass through this door with an open mind and closed prejudices. John did.

**-----HELP WANTED: CAN WE CREATE A GREEN UUCO SANCTUARY?-----**

Charlene Dye is spearheading this effort, as she tells us: "Information from the UU Ministry for Earth defines a Green Sanctuary as 'a congregation that lives out its commitment to the Earth by creating a sustainable life style for its members as individuals and as a faith community. Sustainable living is not about our material comfort (though these choices are an important part of the overall life style); it is about choosing to live in a way that nurtures life, builds relationships and rejects material consumption as the sole determinant of happiness.'

"Two Sundays ago, I expressed a concern about the Oxford-Lafayette- University community not having an established plan to lessen our carbon footprint. After the meeting, Gail told me about the UU Ministry for Earth and sent me the links you will find below. The UUME program is an excellent guideline of how to begin to tackle a problem that seems overwhelming by working within the church to make a difference in that specific environment. Please look over the information in these links, and if you are interested in forming a Green Sanctuary Committee, let me know and we will set a date and time for our first meeting.

"I am excited about this for many reasons, but the

main reason is that it is a movement to do something more than just expressing a concern."

Charlene's links are:

[http://uuministryforearth.org/grs\\_overview.htm](http://uuministryforearth.org/grs_overview.htm)  
<http://archive.uua.org/ga/ga01/2065a.html>

You can contact Charlene at 238-2739, or via e-mail at [chickenranch@peoplepc.com](mailto:chickenranch@peoplepc.com). Our involvement can help make this happen.

**-----UUCO RETREAT WAS A SUCCESS!-----**  
45 members and friends attended all or part of our November 3-4 retreat. Along with hugs and smiles, evaluations collected at the end of the retreat expressed the energy, excitement and friendship generated by working and playing together, exchanging ideas and ideals in a beautiful setting away from our usual routine.

Some highlights: Adults and children discovered some things about themselves and each other while making/sharing their personal coat-of-arms..Each person illustrated the words/ideas that he/she tries to live by, the things that nourish him/her, and what brings him/her to UUCO. We reviewed comments collected this fall concerning our mission statement, then divided into small groups for further brainstorming. We reflected as individuals on what we love about UUCO and what would make it even better for us. Based on themes that emerged from our reflection cards, we formed groups to explore three topics: spirituality, discussion, and compassion. We had fun together, hiking around the lake, singing around the campfire (the children roasted marshmallows for the adults!), walking the rip-line, and just sitting in relaxed conversation.

Our Sunday service was held outdoors in the sunshine overlooking the lake, a perfect setting for participating in the spiritual practices of several of our members.

Many thanks to all who attended and to those who

helped with planning, buying food, leading activities, clean-up, and childcare.

-----UUCO BOARD ACTIVITIES -----

Your UUCO board met in September and October. Here are summaries of their activities:

September 17 - The seven board members present conducted routine business and addressed several topics prior to spending the bulk of the meeting discussing a board covenant, including its purpose and desirable components. We discussed two requests to the board for donations and voted to donate to the Interfaith Compassion Ministry and to make a membership contribution to the AMOS Network. We discussed amenities for the building and agreed to establish a small committee to explore purchasing art for the main meeting room. We discussed the process for revisiting the congregation's mission statement, and briefly discussed planning for the retreat at Wall Doxey. Thank you to Larry Shaffer for mounting two fire extinguishers, one near the kitchen and one in the trailer near the door.

October 24 - The six board members present conducted routine business, briefly discussed retreat planning, and approved a two-pronged board covenant (statements of how we will strive to treat one another while fulfilling our obligations as trustees). We approved a contribution to support an ad in the Daily Mississippian and approved a donation to a family in need, pending matching support from members. Much of the meeting was spent discussing the resignation of David Smith from his post as treasurer (a letter went out to members regarding this). All expressed sadness over David's resignation and appreciation for the excellent contributions he has made to the congregation. We then discussed positive steps that can be taken to reinvigorate dialog within the congregation, the retreat being an important and timely first step. The possibility was raised of splitting the treasurer's responsibilities into two

positions, and it was decided that Gail will try to recruit someone to serve the remainder of David's term as treasurer.

We are pleased to report that Paula Shanks has agreed to serve as our Financial Trustee. Welcome to the board and thank you, Paula!

A common theme running through the two meetings was our work on a board covenant, which we approved in two versions in October:

I. Covenant in prose form

As members of the UUCO Board of Trustees, we promise to follow the guiding principles of our covenant, whose purpose is to lead us to be intentional in our interactions.

1. We will come to our tasks with an open mind.
2. We will practice active listening and thoughtful speaking.
3. We will be respectful of each other's point of view.
4. We will respect each other's time and our own, while we recognize that some tasks may take more time to complete.
5. We will contribute as we are able and not be afraid to ask for help when it is needed.
6. We will seek to represent our congregation's interests and act upon the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism in all that we do together.

II. Covenant as a haiku for intentional interactions

Honesty builds trust  
Trust brings openness, learning  
Create synergy.

Active listening  
Speak thoughts and wear thick skin, but  
Speak thoughtfully please

Respect hearts, minds, lives  
Be present, patient, timely  
Work, laugh together  
Offer as you can  
Let others grow by helping  
Be realistic.

**-----YOUNG UUCO MEMBERS GROW UP, GRADUATE AND MOVE ON-----**

2007 has been a big year for our post-high school members, as many finished their studies at Oxford High and others entered their final year of college. Here's a round-up of accomplishments and activities:

This year's high school graduates include Joseph Hoffheimer, Hannah Holland, Winston McNulty, Mary Ray and Daniel Warren. Joseph is in his freshman year at Vassar College where he's enjoying the personal freedom and opportunities to explore many new subject areas. Hannah finished her high school studies and is working on regaining her health before embarking on other projects. Winston, like Joseph, is at Vassar College, bringing the number of Oxford students at this New York college to a total of three. Mary is a freshman at the University of Mississippi — and a new adult member of our congregation! Daniel is a student in the Honors College at Mississippi State.

2007 marks the beginning of the senior year in college for Sierra Mattern Gelbard and William Miller. Sierra is the daughter of Dan Mattern and Elaine Gelbard, and the big sister of Jillian Gelbard Mattern. A senior psychology major at Pomona College near Los Angeles, Sierra loves soaking up the California sunshine and culture, especially the nearby urban pleasures such as theater and Disneyland. UUCO was an important part of Sierra's life in Oxford, beginning at age eight, when she was the eldest child in the inaugural Sunday School class, and continuing through high school, when the youth group members and mentors provided her invaluable acceptance and encouragement to grow into herself. Her post-graduation plans are not yet solidified, but will definitely include having a home of her own where she can expand her dorm-allowable family of fish and rodents to include cats and dogs.

William Miller, son of Pat Miller and Gail Stratton, was a member of the high school youth

group for two years before he went to Mississippi School for Math and Science to finish high school. The youth group advisors at that time were Toni Stevens and Keith Wright. William felt he had found his "place" in the youth group. He (and his not-so-usual family) was certainly affirmed and supported by the youth group and the congregation. It was his good experience in UU that led his parents to UUism. He is now in his senior year at Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, GA, majoring in interactive game design. His vision is to have his own game design company.

**----UUCO DRAMA QUEENS, AND KINGS!--**

5 members of the congregation are participating actively in a holiday production of "Christmas Presence," written by our own Dinah Swan and directed by our own Terry Swan. Theatre Oxford presents "Christmas Presence" for four performances: November 29 and 30 and December 1 at 8:00 p.m., and a Sunday matinee, December 2 at 2:00 p.m., at the Powerhouse Arts Center on University Avenue. Tickets are available at the Powerhouse and at the door before each performance: \$10 adults, \$7 students and \$5 for children 12 years and under.

"Christmas Presence" is a family southern Christmas comedy with music set in Oxford, Mississippi. A week before Christmas a typical American family, the Truemans, are free-falling into holiday madness when they grudgingly agree to host a family of foreign immigrants for a few days. When the huge, outlandish Udahvelatroika family arrives (who knows where they're from or what language they speak), they obliterate the Truemans' usual routine. In scenes touching and hilarious, the foreigners show their hosts the deeper meaning of Christmas.

The cast of 24 Oxford actors includes middle, high school and college students, Ole Miss faculty, five "regular employed adults," two lawyers, a dean, a dancer and a dentist (as well as a significant number of UU's). Dinah says, "It's

a comedy with lots of music, dance and craziness that reminds us about the traditional values of giving and loving.” A happy ending is guaranteed.

## **NEWS FROM THE MID-SOUTH DISTRICT**

We Are Better Together!

From the Reverend Rod Debs, Minister Trustee,  
Mid-South District Board and Minister of the  
UU Fellowship of the Emerald Coast

In this season of love and light, of gratitude and generosity, I want to share with you a moment when I was surprised by my sense of gratitude for the network of our UU congregations that we call the UUA.

Our congregation had an Association Sunday this fall. It turned out to be a powerful day.

During our Association Sunday services we watched 50 visuals. We saw UUs in front of their buildings, in worship and song, and at potluck dinners and discussion. We saw President Bill Sinkford with the Dalai Lama, with children and teens, preaching and making public witness for social justice arm in arm with many UUs. We saw the faces of UUA Board and staff, maps of UUA districts and of UUs worldwide. We saw our own MSD Board and staff, working together, eating and smiling.

Most of us know with certainty that our UU congregations can do more together than alone. But that truth was palpable that morning. That morning we took in \$800 to send in as our 2007 Association Sunday gift to the UUA – and it felt wonderful to make a special offering to our larger family. (More folks said they would send individual gifts.)

Then this came home to me: no matter where we go in this great land, we have a network of UUs who aspire to the same principles and values as we. On a year-in and year-out basis we have all this for a measly \$54 to the UUA and \$20 to the

district from each of us, annually. We should be looking around the for the police! This is a steal!

On Association Sunday we saw clearly that we are better together. We saw clearly how important our connection to our larger family is. I am so grateful for our UUA!

## **-----OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS-----**

For those of us anticipating a major meltdown over the shopping excesses of the season, here's a recommendation from Membership Trustee Shanna Flaschka:

If you are looking for a different way to give gifts to your loved ones this holiday season, consider checking out [www.alternativegifts.org](http://www.alternativegifts.org). You can choose among an outstanding array of giving opportunities, such as equipping a clinic in Bolivia, greenhouses for hospitals in North Korea, gorilla protection in Rwanda, and safe houses for refugees and migrant women in Lebanon.

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

Please let Luanne know of corrections, additions, and any news that you might have for our next newsletter, due out at the end of December. We expect a shorter newsletter given the holidays, but before long in the new year we hope to have features on activities of our younger members, news from UUCO members who have moved to new communities, and interesting things that all of us have done. Luanne can be reached at [lbuchana@olemiss.edu](mailto:lbuchana@olemiss.edu), or at 234-3833. Have a great holiday season!