



In Oxford a chapter of PFLAG is just getting established, with Eunice Benton, Gail Stratton, Laura Antonow, Ann Phillippi, and Pat Miller part of the leadership.

**In Sunday School**, we are continuing to use the We Believe curriculum this semester. Susan Pedigo started the kids off with a great lesson related to Martin Luther King. For a number of reasons, we have decided to try having Sunday School concurrent with the service. So starting in February, Sunday School will begin at 11:00. We will meet February 13 and 27.  
Susie Adams

**TUPELO GROUP:** Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Tupelo meets the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Sundays at 1301 Marshall Street. For more info call 662-620-7344 or visit [www.uutupelo.org](http://www.uutupelo.org).

**Feb 6** Nan Johnson from Watervalley will speak on Quakerism: Beyond Oatmeal

**Feb 13** Discussion: Guest speaker talks about Christianity

**Feb 20** Dr. Lisa Jennings from Church of the River, Memphis

**Feb 27** John Wages leads a discussion on "Can Sin Be Inherited?" from books "Ishmael" by Daniel Quinn and "The Culture of Make Believe": by Derrick Jensen

**>>>>>>> YOUTH GROUPS <<<<<<<<<**  
**Highschool Youth**

On Jan 7-9 we hosted the YAC meeting for the midsouth district. A total of 26 people participated, coming from as far away as Florida! We had a good time and met a lot of great people!

**Upcoming events:**

**Jan 26**, We will have a planning meeting (6:30-800 at UUCO) for the service we will be leading.

**Jan 30**, We will lead the regular Sunday service.

**Feb 2**, Movie night. Location to be announced.

**Middle School Youth**

The middle school youth group met in mid-January to organize spring activities. Since we're still working out a schedule, suggestions are still welcome! Please contact Elaine, 236-2545 or [egelbard@olemiss.edu](mailto:egelbard@olemiss.edu), or Luanne, 234-3833 or [lbuchana@olemiss.edu](mailto:lbuchana@olemiss.edu), to share your thoughts. We'll e-mail folks about activities that will occur before the next newsletter. Thanks!

**>>>> NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT <<<<<**  
The Brewers—Ashley, Steve, Charlotte and Lee

We have lived in Oxford for about 8 years. Steve is 40 and teaches Ecology and does research about plant conservation and on carnivorous plants. He plays guitar. Charlotte, 11, is also musical and plays violin and sings in the Oxford Children's Choir. Ashley, also 40, likes to bake and is working on becoming a Certified Master Gardener with the county Extension Office. She is also taking a course in writing for children. Lee, 6, has 8 rubber snakes in his collection and an abiding interest in the Big Cats. He also plays soccer and is an excellent dancer. Here are some things the kids want to add:

"We eat rocks!"-Lee

"We have a whoopee cushion."--Lee

"My best subjects are Science and Social Studies."--Charlotte

"My favorite color is light purple."--Charlotte

"We have a cat. Our favorite CD is by They Might Be Giants."--Lee and Charlotte

**>>>> NEWS FROM BILLY & TONI <<<<<**  
Hi there -

Okay - after Adnan's wedding (nikka) in Aligarh, courtesy of the bride's family, it is our family's turn to really put on the dog and to host the brides family. Yes, you got that right - there's a little friendly competition here and definitely you want everyone to feel like they had a nice time.

The walima was held in Delhi - about 3 hours away from Aligarh by car. Adnan's father, Adib, has a very good friend who is a minister here - that's not a preacher - it's a politician. They are on the British system here of course. Sorry, I don't remember what he is minister of. Doesn't really matter, what it means at this point is that the house where this was held was in THE nicest section of town close to the diplomatic section where all the ambassadors and other muckity mucks live. The house is British Colonial built sometime around 1900 or earlier. It was large, surrounded by a wall, had a guard house and a separate guest house in the back yard. The event was held in the back yard. There was a huge tent without walls (I mean the size of a small house). Sofas for everyone to sit on set on two sides with an aisle down the middle. And there was a decorated stage for the bride and groom to sit on and be welcomed, congratulated and viewed.

Billy and I set up our instruments in front of the stage - a little off to one side on the ground. We played for about 1.5 hours of the greatest hits of the BilliTones from the 1950's, 60's and 70's. We also learned a new Hindi Film song which we played last. They couldn't believe these 2 white people could sing in their language. All the while, members of our Indian family were standing up front cheering us on. It was so heartwarming for us to see how much they love us.

After the concert, dinner - there was one side about 60 feet long with nothing but vegetarian food and then another 60 feet of nothing but different kinds of meat dishes to serve yourself from. Then there was the dessert table - about 6 feet long. Yes - it was a huge feast. Everyone congratulated us on the music, especially the Hindi film song. Our Indian family is kind of upper middle class and in this case, Adnan married into a wealthy family. So, we helped our family look good! As one niece, Mona, put it last night - "we added the spice to the evening."

So, today is New Years Eve day here!!! - Tonight is the Manja. That's where the family gathers before the next wedding and sing to the bride. Guess who's performing? Yep! The BilliTones. We've worked up a new Hindi song to a country and western beat

with 3 of our 8 and 9 year old nieces here and it will be extremely cute. The grandfather of the bride has written a poem to the bride and two other nieces (they are in their 30's) are putting it to a tune and will sing it to the bride. The bride is Taran, IG's daughter. This is the friend of Billy's who died 2 years ago this February. It is both a happy and very sad time for everyone here. Of course, IG is on everyone's mind and we all miss him at this event especially.

That's part of why it makes such a difference for us to be here. We can help lift the energy with music in a way that would be hard for them to do by themselves. IG loved music - all kinds - and he loved the BilliTones. We've saved all the favorites of our family to play tonight in honor of Taran's wedding. We know IG would want her to have a very special wedding.

During the day today we will have the viewing of the jewelry - I have already seen it - about 10 sets of gold and onyx, diamond, pearl, ruby, emerald, topaz and aquamarine necklaces, earrings, etc. Also the viewing on the clothes. From Taran's own family she has received almost 45 suits and dresses. Tomorrow, the groom's side will send another 15 - 20 sets of clothes and sets of jewelry. Today there will be facials, henna applied on the hands and lots of family and food.

Taran's nikka (wedding ceremony) will be on Jan 2 here in Aligarh and the wallima will be on Jan. 3 in Dehli.

I'll write again after some of the events and tell you about them. For now - happy new year!!!

### **And, from Nepal:**

Hope you are all well. Billy and I have just returned from Kathmandu. We gave five concerts there in three cities. One was in a city called Pokara, the name means city of lakes. Our hotel there was called Base Camp Resort and the whole city is at the foot of the Himalayas.

On the first day, Billy and I arose at 6:45 am, looked out our window, and there they were!

Unbelievably grand, majestic, beautiful mountains. The sun was not yet up over the horizon, but the peaks are so tall the sun reflects on them from below the horizon. They were snow topped and reddish from the early morning sun. We quickly put on our clothes and walked across the street to a little park by this huge and beautiful natural lake nestled and winding among the green hills. There were about 10 or so other people - all Nepalis - taking their morning exercise. They were doing everything from standing in place stretches exercises to jogging. Billy and I took our aerobic walk and every time we made the turn at the lake shore we got a beautiful view of the mountains. After about 10 minutes of walking the sun started to come up over the horizon where we could see it - a large red ball slowly rising from the ground just opposite the mountains. It was a spectacular sight, and one that makes all the effort of being in a place like this worth it.

This was a real treat - it is often cloudy in Nepal and sometimes you only see the mountains about once every 5 to 6 days.

The Nepali people are especially nice. They greet you everywhere with "Namaste" and a smile. They are courteous, not pushy, and very poor. They are having a very hard time now because the Maoists have gained such a foot hold. Many countries have issued a travel advisory and so not many tourists are coming now. This is not because it is dangerous for the tourists. The most the Maoist have done to the tourists is to "kidnap" them - hold them for a day while reading Maoist propaganda and ask for money. The problem is they are unbelievably cruel and torturous to the Nepali people. They are doing things like using a drill and drilling into people's legs while others in the village are watching. What do they want? They want to centralize everything, get rid of privately owned lands and businesses and have a regime like that in Cambodia under Pol Pot. Why - so they can have all the power over the people. So to keep from funding this group of terrorists, countries have asked their citizens to not come and put themselves in the position of "being captured". This is not happening in the cities - it is happening in the countryside where people go trekking. Hence, all our travel from city to city was

on small planes.

Needless to say, the people are really worried about their country and their economy is really starting to suffer. Many Nepalis came up after our program and told us how nice it was for them to come to our concert and just relax and have a good time for a change - just forget about the worries of the country for 2 hours. This was extremely gratifying for us. There seems to be so little we can do.

The second day in Nepal was cloudy. We got up at 6:30 and had a car take us to the bottom of a trail and we climbed the equivalent of about 100 flights of stairs up the mountain to reach the World Peace Stupa, built by the Japanese. It was a beautiful sight, little houses all along the way - people and children all greeting us with Namaste as they were going to collect water from the common wells for the day's water. The stupa itself was so peaceful with lovely gold statues of Buddha, a small garden and on a clear day, a spectacular view of the Anapurna range of the Himalayas. It was cloudy that day and so we had to be satisfied with the aura of peace and tranquility of the stupa in the early morning. We visited the small meditation room - complete with a statue of Buddha - and had our morning meditation there.

The trip back down the mountainside was much quicker than the trip up, we had breakfast and then went off to the radio station to be interviewed. When we left Pokara, it was still cloudy and the sun was beginning to set on the ground. We took off and climbed up and up through the grey clouds, still climbing up and up - we couldn't see anything - still climbing up and up when we finally burst through the clouds, the sun shining brightly and the mountains exploded into view from the left side of the plane!!! Everyone on the plane just gasped at the beauty. There we were - high above the clouds and the mountains were still towering high above us. Once again - they were reddish, this time from the setting sun. The clouds looked like an ocean of soft, fluffy cotton candy, some of them looked like a wave hitting against the mountain - motionless, like a picture. Other places the clouds looked like

the mist that would come from the ocean spray when a wave strikes the shore. Some of the smaller peaks just barely showing above the clouds, reminding me of small islands in the ocean when flying to Hawaii. It was magical and Billy and I felt so privileged to witness this beauty. The entire flight back to Kathmandu was along the mountain range and so we filled our vision, our brains, our hearts and spirits with this view for about 20 minutes before descending back down through the clouds to the ground.

There is much more to tell about Nepal and I hope to have another opportunity to write about it, but the email connection in Aligarh is slow and intermittent so I am not sure I will get the chance. I'll do my best to arrange it.

Namaste -  
Toni & Billy

>>>> **MIDSOUTH DISTRICT** <<<<<<<<  
2005 Mid-South District's Annual Assembly  
April 22 – 24, 2005

Mark your calendars and make your plans!! Plan to join several hundred other MSD UUs in Birmingham, Alabama for the 2005 MSD Annual Assembly!! Our theme for this year is “**Deeper and Wider - Way to Grow.**” The key-note speaker is the Rev. Dr. Marilyn Sewell from the First Unitarian Church in Portland, Oregon. She has served as the Senior Minister for 12 years and is also a writer and editor. Her best-known book, *Cries of the Spirit*, is an anthology of women's spiritual poetry and prose. *Breaking Free: Women of Sprit at Mid-Life and Beyond*, her latest book, is a collection of personal essays by well-known writers focusing on changes in their spirituality as they mature. You'll want to be at this Assembly for many reasons!

- There will be several worship services, time to reflect and rejoice with fellow UUS.
- You'll have workshops galore to choose from on Saturday, all focusing on some aspect of the Assembly theme. Confirmed as a speaker is UU Storyteller, Joshua Searle-White. He has presented at General Assembly and is in high-demand as a presenter.

- Youth will be invited to participate (via the YAC) as full participants in the programming.
- Singers can join in with the Assembly Choir which will, no doubt, delight all attendees as they do each year.
- Child care will be provided for the wee ones, and child programming will be available for the older children.

Session and registration details will be available on the MSD website at <http://www.uua.org/msd> during March and will be mailed to congregations during April. Mark your calendars now!!!!

For more information, contact Mary Shelton in Nashville at [maryshelton@comcast.net](mailto:maryshelton@comcast.net)