

# UUCOMMUNICATOR

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford

February 2009

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## -----CONTENTS-----

DIRECTIONS FOR HOW TO FIND US  
SUNDAY SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY  
SUMMARIES OF NOVEMBER AND  
DECEMBER BOARD MEETINGS  
YOU, TOO, CAN BE A SERVICE LEADER!  
ACCOMPLISHING OUR GOALS THROUGH  
FINANCIAL PLEDGES  
UUCO NEWS BRIEFS  
CHALICE LIGHTER CALL FOR GEORGIA  
CONGREGATION  
NEWS FROM THE MID-SOUTH DISTRICT  
UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST TO  
UUCO MEMBERS

## -----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](http://www.UUTupelo.org).

## ----SUNDAY SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY----

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

February 1 - "The Compassion in Being Pro-Choice"

Barry Chase, president of Memphis Regional Planned Parenthood, will be our guest speaker at a give-away-the-plate service, with proceeds going to the Memphis-area Planned Parenthood. Terri Wright is the service leader.

February 8 - Valentine's Day service  
"You need not think alike to love alike." These words from the sixteenth century are attributed to Francis David, a Unitarian priest in the court of King John Sigismund of Transylvania, the only known Unitarian monarch. Join us on Valentine's day to contemplate love, learn some Unitarian history and make some valentines! This is an intergenerational service and all ages are welcome.

February 15 - " Misunderstanding God: Journey of A Black Belt Agnostic"  
Our guest speaker is Robert L. Williams, a black lay leader from Birmingham Unitarian Universalist Church in Alabama.

Feb. 22 - "Nurture your spirit and help heal the world."  
Join us in exploring the connections between spirit and action. This is a religious education Sunday, with classes provided for our youth.

Looking ahead to March, mark your calendar for the March 1 visit of Rev. Jean Rowe, Minister Emerita of Neshoba Unitarian Universalist Church in Germantown, Tennessee. Rev. Rowe is a Universalist with roots in Christian, feminist, Buddhist and mystic traditions.

## -----SUMMARY OF NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER BOARD MEETINGS-----

Both the November and December board meetings were primarily discussions of where we are as a congregation and what changes, if any, to our

organizational structure would best serve the congregation in fulfilling its mission statement.

In November, Briggs Massey, along with some others, filled us in on the UP group they attended at the Healthy Congregations Conference. UP is a program to help small congregations, such as ours, in the Mid-South District. Briggs also updated the Board on activities of the book group. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to discussing the roles and organizational relationships of the Board and committee chairs. We concluded that not all committee chairs need to be Board Trustees and that the Communications chair, in particular, does not need to be a Board Trustee. We made some progress toward figuring out which Board trustee positions would provide the best communication pathway for various non-trustee committee chairs. This will be an ongoing discussion, culminating in a proposal for changes to the Bylaws. The Board welcomes input from all UUCO members.

In December, we approved the July-November financial report that was skillfully prepared and presented by Paula Shanks. We discussed ways to make Membership Sunday important to existing members and ways to help more current members share their gifts within the broad mission of the congregation. Finally, Gail presented ideas on four types of congregational growth outlined by Connie Goodbread: organic, maturational, incarnational, and numerical. We discussed these ideas and where our congregation is in this scheme.

**-----SERVING YOUR CONGREGATION AS A SERVICE LEADER-----**

We thank Sharon Walls for the following ideas about stepping up as a service leader for UUCO, either through direct involvement in the service or as a committee member helping to plan our Sundays.

Being service leader for a Sunday morning service at the UU Congregation of Oxford has been one of

the most satisfying experiences of my life. It can be good for you, too.

Did you think I was going to urge you to help out the congregation by being service leader?

It is a wonderful service that you give to our spiritual community when you welcome us and introduce us to worship on a Sunday morning. You can feel good about giving your time, attention, and intention in this way. It certainly benefits the congregation.

The benefits to you individually are worth looking at, too.

You might think that it is easy to stand up in front of a group of people you know and care about to give the opening words, welcome us to the worship service, sometimes moderate joys and concerns, introduce and take up the collection (pass the plate), and introduce the speaker.

After all, we have a well-outlined order of worship. You and the speaker, working with the programming committee, can adapt it and simply plug in the pieces of the service. And these are people you know, people who know you.

Many find it even more difficult to speak to a group of friends than to lecture to a class, give a presentation, or conduct a staff meeting. The more you do it, holding in your heart the intention to play a part in a meaningful service on that Sunday morning, the easier it becomes and the more it expands your confidence.

As service leader, you may be called upon to select and say the opening words that set the tone for the service. You will want to select words that express your thoughts and feelings. Or you may be asked to deliver the opening words the speaker requests. You get to begin the service by speaking from your heart.

The welcome and announcements are kept simple. Moderating the sharing of joys and concerns gives

you the opportunity to offer compassion or celebrate with those in the congregation.

Passing the collection plate offers you the chance to explain and understand the purpose of this action which some see as mundane and less “spiritual” than other parts of the service. Since UUCO is self-supporting, contributing to our finances through the collection plate or through honoring our pledges is literally an act supporting our chosen mission.

Through performing all of these selfless acts, you build your confidence in yourself. You will find that the positive experiences spill over into your daily life. Once you have spoken from your heart in front of the congregation, you will be much less concerned about expressing yourself – whether in a staff meeting, one on one with your boss or supervisor, or even giving a presentation to a large group of people you don’t know.

Organizing your thoughts in the preparation of the order of worship is a skill that easily flows into organizing your work responsibilities or organizing your day.

The more you give of yourself as a Sunday morning service leader, the more clarity and willingness to give of yourself in your daily life you will develop.

It is win-win for both UUCO and you.

Now, what about participating on the Sunday Programming Committee?

Have you ever attended a service at UUCO and thought, man, where did they come up with that idea? Have you ever thought you could do better, or that you would like an entirely different service? Or did you attend a service that really hit the spot and you’d like more like it?

Bring your ideas, suggestions, and criticisms to the Sunday programming committee. Members are: Sharon Walls and Anne Quinney co-chairs, Gail Stratton, Pat Miller, Mary Queyja, Julia Rholes, Terri Wright, and Shanna Flaschka. Any one else

who is interested can come to the planning meetings, bring ideas, or suggest services or speakers.

Just because you suggest a speaker or a topic does not mean you will be asked to arrange it, contact the proposed speaker, or be service leader – although you may certainly do those things if you would like to. So please bring your ideas and suggestions to any one on the committee, or to a planning meeting.

**-----PLEDGING TO SUPPORT UUCO:  
ACCOLADES FOR 2008-2009-----**

The first Sunday of February begins our month-long pledge drive for 2009-2010. In March, board members will develop the budget for the 2009-2010 fiscal year based on the pledges we received. That budget will be brought to the congregation at our Annual Congregational Meeting early in April.

This last year, (2008-2009) our pledge total increased over the previous year by 9%. Let's go for 10% this year!! If each of us increased our pledge by 10%, we would achieve that goal!

"Should we increase our pledge in light of current national economic challenges?" Yes, responds the UUA Stewardship and Development Department. This is the time to focus our financial support on those things we hold most valuable. We affirm: "We are generous people." We know we are making a difference in this important time in our history in our community, in our Mid-South District and in our nation as a whole by nurturing and growing this liberal religious congregation for all who seek to join us.

Your generosity to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford this past year has allowed us to accomplish many things.

1. We enjoyed varied Sunday programs with regular visits from ministers: Barry Whittemore, Dr. Tony Stringer, Fred Hammond, Erik David Carlson, Bill Leggett, Sarah Dan Jones; guest speakers: Leyla Moderzadeh, Rebecca Jernigan, John Lober, Chris

Aloia, Dr. Howard Lenhoff, Don Manning-Miller, Wil Howie; special entertainment: Jimmyle Listenbee and her dance ensemble, Ken Sizemore, Cynthia Linton and her daughters.

2. We provided regular religious education for four age groups of young people including teenagers. The theme for the year is world religions—check out some of their projects in the RE room! We hosted the Young Adult Conference January 11-13, held an adult RE discussion on voluntary simplicity and an adult study group on the Eckhart Tolle book, *A New Earth*.

3. We had two workshops at UU Hall: "Creating Sacred Space for Transformative Worship," conducted by Rev. Fred Hammond on, August 16 and "Building Community Through Music" with Sarah Dan Jones on January 10.

4. We have generously supported charities and increased our connection with our local community through our "giving away the plate" each month, providing a total of \$2,532 from July through December 2008, to Habitat for Humanity, Knoxville Relief Fund, Gulf Coast UU Fellowship, the Toles Family, UU Association and Interfaith Compassion Ministries. We collected food for the Oxford Pantry.

5. We continued development of the Green Sanctuary Program by applying for and being awarded a Chalice Lighter grant. We added insulation to the attic in December.

6. We have increased our connections with a wider group of Unitarian Universalists. Six members attended the Healthy Congregation Conference in Birmingham in October; six attended the Stewardship Conference in Jackson in January, six attended Religious Education workshop, "Small Power," on May 24 in Jackson, two attended the Junior High Convention in Huntsville in April, and several from the high school group attended a protest at School of the Americas. Two members attended General Assembly in Ft. Lauderdale in June, and several people have participated in the Mid-South District UP! Program for small

congregations.

7. We participated in the National Religious Campaign Against Torture by purchasing and displaying a banner and joining a protest march with the Tupelo UU congregation in June. Members wrote letters, signed petitions, and contacted elected officials. The results met our dreams; the new US President has signed an Executive Order banning torture! We also joined the nation in the Martin Luther King Day of Service by picking up litter from county roads.

8. We applied for and received a grant from the Mid-South District in the amount of \$300 for Local Public Visibility. We purchased a new banner, "Welcome to Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford," and augmented our advertising in the Oxford Eagle and Daily Mississippian.

9. We held our annual retreat at Wall Doxey in November.

10. We provided childcare at all services, workshops and the retreat.

11. We reviewed procedures for congregational safety and preparedness, and compiled emergency contact directory for members.

12. We provided space for a dance class, for a Reiki workshop and for a Tai Chi group.

Without your dedication and support, none of these actions would be possible. For that, we are profoundly grateful. Please consider pledging again this year to continue this valuable work!

#### -----UUCO NEWS BRIEFS-----

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford welcomes Ross Haenfler and Skadi Snook as our newest members!! A warm welcome to both Skadi and Ross, and a big thank-you as they continue as the adult leaders for the UUCO High school group!

UUCO received the following thanks from the Education Fund of WAND, Women's Action for New Directions, after their visit to Oxford in the

fall: "Thank you so much for your generous gift of \$265 to WAND Education Fund. Your contribution is especially timely, as a longtime supporter is doubling every dollar donated through the end of 2008. Your gift is worth twice as much right now!"

Many from UUCO joined forces to clean up County Road 198 on the National Day of Service in honor of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Due to your newsletter editor's ongoing conflicts with technology, you may



need a magnifying glass to identify the participants. But suffice it to say that a lot of refuse was gathered and carted away (15 bags of litter and at least 5 bags of recyclables), food was collected for the Oxford Pantry, and great treats and the good deed itself served as a reward afterwards. Thanks to all who participated!



Are you interested in being a provider in a UU bed-and-breakfast network, now in its 29<sup>th</sup> year? If so, please get in touch with the newsletter editor at [uuoxford@uuoxford.com](mailto:uuoxford@uuoxford.com), and she will forward information on how to make a listing. If you are interested in using such a network for your own travel, please visit <http://uurehome.com/index.php> for more information.

**-----CHALICE LIGHTER CALL FOR ROSWELL, GEORGIA'S UUMAN-----**

The Chalice Lighter Call for Roswell, Georgia's Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North -- is in the mail to Mid-South Chalice Lighters!

Please give generously to the call for this congregation -- \$10, \$20, or more!

If you are not already a Chalice Lighter but wish to

participate, send a check to the Mid-South District at this address:

Chalice Lighter Call  
Mid-South District Office  
9 County Road 1058  
Oxford, Mississippi 38655

This Chalice Lighter Call goes out to assist UU Metro Atlanta North (UUMAN) in Roswell, Georgia, with funding for significant improvements to their current building. Safety of facilities and improvement of the fellowship facilities will be the large parts of this project.

UUMAN's intention is to enhance their abilities to provide a welcoming, safe environment for spiritual growth and community building. The projects to be partially funded through this Chalice Lighter Call include the abatement of a serious mold problem and renovation of the kitchen of the fellowship hall to create space that meets environmental goals and makes the Fellowship Hall more usable by renters. The UUMAN community has an increasing number of interest groups using the facilities, both internal and from rentals. The kitchen renovations considered are focused on making it more sustainable, energy efficient, and more accommodating toward rentals of varying types.

Your Chalice Lighter contribution of \$10 or \$20 (or more!) will be a gift to support growth at the UUMAN Congregation in Roswell as well as the overall growth of Unitarian Universalism in Mid-South District and across the country. Please give generously!

**NEWS FROM THE MID-SOUTH DISTRICT- THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESIDENTS**

February's Presidents Day is a reminder of the importance of presidents! In a time when we have just elected and inaugurated a new president for our country, we will also elect a new president for our Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

Involvement in this democratic process is a sacred responsibility! The presidential election at our UUA deserves our attention.

The Rev. Dr. Laurel Hallman and the Rev. Peter Morales are the candidates for the UUA presidency. And, while the election will occur at the 2009 General Assembly, in Salt Lake City, UT, next June, Unitarian Universalists everywhere are considering which of these leaders they will choose.

The UUA's Elections webpage has campaign-related materials at: <http://www.uua.org/elections>

Here's the link to Rev. Hallman's web site: <http://www.hallmanforuapresident.com>

Here's the link to Rev. Morales' web site: <http://www.moralesforuapresident.org>

Is your congregation making time to provide information about the candidates for this important post? Each congregation votes in this process. And, Presidents Day is upon us!

**-----FEBRUARY EVENTS OF INTEREST-----**

The Sara Isom Center at the University of Mississippi announces the following events:

February 13-14: The Feminist Majority presents "The Vagina Monologues," the annual fundraiser for the Family Crisis Services of Northwest Mississippi, at the Powerhouse Arts Center. Tickets are sold by the Powerhouse. Contact person: [mjwall@olemiss.edu](mailto:mjwall@olemiss.edu)

February 27-28: Transgender author, performance artist, and activist Kate Bornstein gives a plenary presentation and workshops at the 9th Annual Isom Student Gender Conference at UM. This is free and open to the public. Contact the Isom Center at 915-5916.

Also, First Presbyterian Church of Oxford will host

a workshop on prayer on February 21. More information is available from Ann O'Dell at 234-2907. You also may email her at [ago@olemiss.edu](mailto:ago@olemiss.edu).

**-----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](mailto:lbuchana@olemiss.edu).

We hope to send out our March newsletter by Thursday, February 26.. Please consider submitting an article! Thanks for this month's contributions go to Susie Adams, Paula Shanks, Gail Stratton and Sharon Walls.