

## UUCOMMUNICATOR

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford

May 2009

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### -----SUNDAY SERVICES FOR MAY-----

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

#### **May 3 - Exploring Unitarian Universalist History**

Have you wondered about where Unitarian Universalism came from? What are its roots? What are its various shoots? Come this Sunday to learn! Enku Ide will be our service leader.

#### **May 10 - Celebration of Mothers Day**

“Mama exhorted her children ...to ‘jump at de sun.’ We might not land on the sun, but at least we would get off the ground.” This quote from Zora Neale Hurston, reprinted in *Quest*, a publication of the Church of the Larger Fellowship, forms the basis of a service led by Shanna Flaschka.

#### **May 17 - Living the Interdependent Web**

The Rev. Jean M. Rowe will be our guest minister. She tells us:

“Scientist Gregory Bateson asks, ‘What pattern connects the crab to the lobster and the orchid to

the primrose and all four of them to me? And me to you?’

“As a child, without knowing it, I lived the interdependent web. I felt a connection with the trees, fields and hills and gullies of my natural world. I still think that felt **interconnection is a crucial part of the alphabet of authentic, awake living.** Long before I was a Unitarian Universalist, I upheld our seventh principle. I will be sharing some readings from Scott Russell Sanders, *Staying Put.*”

#### **May 24 - Flower Service**

The first Unitarian flower service or flower communion was held in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1923. Norbert Cebak, the founder of the Unitarian Church in Czechoslovakia, saw the need to unite his congregants, who came from Protestant, Catholic and Jewish backgrounds, without excluding anyone. We continue this fine tradition! Each person should bring a flower to add to the common vase.

#### **May 31 - The Power of Speaking Our Spiritual Truth**

John Rasberry, our speaker, is a counselor from Tupelo with many years of experience. He is a trainer, educator and practitioner of the method known as psychodrama. John will be guiding us in a journey about “The Power of Speaking Our Spiritual Truth.” It promises to be enlightening.

#### **And a little more about music on Sundays:**

Many thanks to Christine Bertz and others who have worked hard to incorporate more music into our services! Check your weekly service reminder to find out about more pre-service practice times.

In addition to voices, our musicians are seeking percussion instruments to add to the sound. If you

have a new or used instrument that you would like to donate, send an e-mail to [uuoxford@uuoxford.com](mailto:uuoxford@uuoxford.com).

-----**WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**-----

On April 19 Anjel Craig and Enku Ide signed the membership book and graciously agreed to write something about themselves for our newsletter.

Here's Anjel:

I'm originally from Picayune and moved to Oxford last year to attend Ole Miss seeking my master's degree in biology/ecological restoration. My research deals with mycorrhizal fungi, and I have a strong passion and conviction that mushrooms will one day save the world. I graduated from USM and left a very active career in the Hattiesburg activism community, where I was founder and president of the Sierra Club and an active member in Amnesty International. Here in Oxford, I have less time for social and community action as a grad student, but through the UU congregation I feel I can once more involve myself in progressive social movements which is something I haven't been able to do much though the university.

I have been in a dedicated relationship with my boyfriend, Paul "Puppy" Tate for 8 years and we are planning on getting married next year. Outside of my academic pursuits, I enjoy gardening and have started a small container gardening project, using worm composting and pellets from my two pet rabbits to make my own fertilizer. I also enjoy belly dancing, tai chi, and pilates which I try to divide my time among to keep in shape. I'm currently living with my best friend, Enku, who has been my friend since 6th grade. In the following year I'm hoping to graduate with my master's and seek a PhD degree somewhere out west, hopefully either Berkeley or UBC Okanagan.

If I were to assign myself a religious label, I'd probably define myself as a humanist/non-theist/with earth religion tendencies. I've been calling myself an atheist prior to joining the UU church but

thanks to this wonderful congregation, I have a renewed appreciation for church, and have been looking back into earth religion and herbalism I first took an interest in as a teenager. While my biology background tends to give me a very scientific outlook on things, I've been lately trying to infuse that critical and skeptic perspective with the open mind of someone still seeking a spiritual path and meaning.

I look forward to being a part of the congregation and helping to involve myself with progressive social actions via the church as well as take part in retreats and hopefully impart a bit of my biological expertise to those in my new church family.

Enku writes:

Hello, UUCO. My name is Enku Ide, and I was born in South Mississippi. While I've moved around a good bit, the area around and between Hattiesburg, MS and New Orleans, LA has been my home for most of my life. I was raised Southern Baptist, although my parents have never been really strict about religious matters. My coming out experience as a queer male was difficult in my specific cultural and faith-based milieu in Picayune, MS. At the time I was active in my school and was one of the leaders of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, although in my final years in Picayune I was pushed out of much of this activity for being too liberal. I sought answers within Christianity, visiting as many diverse denominations as I could in my area, and became disillusioned with the idea of religion all together.

In 2001, I entered the University of Southern Mississippi, where I was active with LGBT activism, human rights, and labor-related struggles (and studied sociology and Spanish). I also encountered Buddhism in Hattiesburg and timidly began to look into this system of faith. I have worked with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in their fight for a living wage and better work standards in the fruit and vegetable fields in Florida, and spent several months with the Common Ground Collective volunteering to work with New Orleans

residents after Hurricane Katrina. I have a passion for working with immigrant communities in the United States, and am thus learning Spanish. Through my activist work, I was able to engage with people of faith who used their religious beliefs and practices to motivate their work for human rights and equality. As a Marxist, I take great inspiration from the struggles of oppressed and exploited peoples across the planet, as well as secular humanist beliefs and practices.

With the continuation of my Buddhist practice, I found an increased respect for Christianity and other faith traditions. I have also come to realize that the moral basis for my human rights work is basically spiritual. I believe we can and must build global and localized communities based on compassion and respect for ourselves, one another, and our Earth. While religious communities may often undermine this goal through dogma and sectarianism, I see a wealth of potential within religious organizing, and I think that interfaith dialogue (including those whose faith is based in the collective liberation of the human species and the Earth) is vital to countering our collective addiction to hatred, greed, violence and exploitation. While my personal practice and path is mainly Buddhist-inspired, I must also recognize that my early Christian instruction on love and right and wrong gave me an important foundation upon which to build my ever evolving moral framework. I have found it helpful to continue to engage with Christian theology and beliefs, both within my personal path and as a way to communicate with others in my larger community about deeply held values which I believe can be used to work toward social and personal liberation. The basis of my spiritual beliefs can be summed up in the phrases, "Let compassion work in the service of insight and insight work in the service of compassion" by HH the Dalai Lama, and that our greatest charge is to love completely, as found in Matt 22:37-40.

In Hattiesburg, I found a home in the Hattiesburg Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (HUUF), and I have been deeply touched by the UU community I have found here in Oxford. I think our UU faith

has much to offer to those of us who feel called together to fellowship and build this community and movement, as well as for our world. The diversity of belief and opinion within Unitarian Universalism is a great strength, I think, for us to support one another to being our best possible selves for the benefit of all people. I would like to be an active part of building this movement while supporting our community here in Oxford. With my specific interests, I hope to help with social action while actively exploring my faith in community. I am joining this congregation with my best friend and roommate Anjel Craig. Already UUCO has been a welcoming and warm place for us and I hope to be able to add to our congregation whatever I may to continue the important work of our congregation in supporting and inspiring one another and finding positive engagements with the world.

Thanks, Anjel and Enku, for giving us this opportunity to get to know you better, and welcome to UUCO!

#### **-----REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT ON OUR CONGREGATIONAL MEETING-----**

On April 19, 2009, we had our Annual Congregational Meeting. Welcome and a warm thank-you to new board members, and an equally warm thank-you to board members willing to stay on for another year!! Thank you for sharing your gifts, talent and time for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford!

Here is the slate of officers for 2009-1010:

President - Terri Wright

Vice President -Julia Rholes

Secretary - Susie Adams

Financial Trustee - Paula Shanks

Religious Education Trustee - Susie Pedigo

Communications Trustee - Linda Cox

Membership Trustee - Linda Iorio

Sunday Programming Trustee-- Gail Stratton

We also welcomed two new members! A warm welcome to Enku Ide and Anjel Craig.

In addition, we voted to approve the budget as presented by the UUCO board. Through the budgeting process and in our handling of money, we seek to live by our UU values and promote the mission of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford.

In our budget this next year we are seeking to do several things, in addition to funding our programming and Religious education and to taking care of our building.

We will pay more on our mortgage in order to reduce the balloon payment in 2012. We have budgeted to continue working with other Mississippi congregations in providing weekly radio spots about Unitarian Universalism on Mississippi Public Broadcasting (listen to "Speaking of Faith"! ). We have budgeted to partially defray the costs of sending two delegates to the General Assembly, the annual gathering of all Unitarian Universalists. And we have budgeted to provide a fall "event" for our children, possibly in conjunction with our annual retreat. All of these things take money, but we are excited about the prospect of doing more and having a bigger impact on our community!

Gail Stratton, President for UUCO

**-SUNDAY SERVICE FEEDBACK WANTED!**  
On April 26, the Sunday Service Program and Worship was built around getting feedback about services this year. The oral and written responses are available on the web page: <http://www.uuoxford.com/> (look under UUCO Documents; it is titled "Feedback Sunday 09). If anyone would like a hard copy, please contact Gail Stratton at 281-0868. Thanks to everyone for this great feedback!

**-----UUCO COMMITS TO CONTINUING SUPPORT OF NATIONAL RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE-----**  
Your UUCO board has reconfirmed its commitment

to supporting the work of NRCAT, as part of a regional network of activism that includes other congregations in the Mid-South District. Luanne Buchanan will be the contact person for our congregation as we work with UU's in Tupelo and elsewhere to get the message out about torture.

In addition to participating in events through our congregation during the month of June, NRCAT asks us to work for the creation of a commission of inquiry, to get to the bottom of our government's use of torture since 2001. With the release several weeks ago of information detailing the use of torture during interrogations, NRCAT reaffirms the need to respond morally by demanding accountability.

You can help by taking this easy step: go to [www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org) and click on "Call for a Commission of Inquiry." And if you haven't yet signed the Statement of Conscience, it too can be accessed from the NRCAT home page.

Look for more information about our involvement with NRCAT in the month of June, and thank you for taking action!

**-----SOCIAL ACTION AND UUCO-----**  
Are you interested in putting your religious values to work through social action? The UUCO board would like to form a social action committee to help us focus on those events and conditions in the world that call on us to respond. Enku Ide and Luanne Buchanan are on the list so far. Are you interested too? If so, send an e-mail to [uuoxford@uuoxford.com](mailto:uuoxford@uuoxford.com) or call 234-3833.

**-----GET YOUR HIKING SHOES READY FOR MAY 16 NATURE TREK!-----**  
Would you like to visit the Strawberry Plains Audubon Center in Holly Springs? There will be a UUCO field trip to the annual Native Plant Sale on Saturday, May 16.

We will carpool there (50-minute drive), explore the

plants, picnic, and take a hike. If you want to go but want to sit out any of those three activities, there are places to sit and enjoy birds while you wait for the others.

The precise timing of the itinerary will be determined once we know whether we can arrange a guided hike or just go on our own. Plan to spend the morning and early afternoon there.

Details of what to bring, when and where to meet will follow. In the meantime, your contact person is Elaine [at\\_egelbard@bellsouth.net](mailto:at_egelbard@bellsouth.net) or 236-2545.

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

General Assembly 2009 takes place June 24-28 in Salt Lake City, UT. This meeting of congregations is where we put our congregational polity into practice – congregations come together to do the work of the Association of Congregations. You'll find lots of information here, including a video invitation to attend this wonderful event!

Go to:

<http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/>

This year we will:

- \*Elect a new President of the UUA and celebrate Bill Sinkford's two terms.
- \*Enjoy the singing of Ysaye Barnwall of Sweet Honey in the Rock.
- \*Hear an inspiring Ware Lecture by Melissa Harris-Lacewell.  
[[www.melissaharrislacewell.com](http://www.melissaharrislacewell.com) ]
- \*Benefit from UU University in GA programming at no extra cost.
- \*Take part in revising the UU Purposes and Principles.

GA registration and housing are open! April 30 is the deadline for lower registration rates [postmarked by April 24]. Find more info here: <http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/registrationhousing/registration/index.shtm>.

This will be my last GA as your UUA Trustee from the MSD. Please come join me in democracy,

fellowship, education, and worship. I hope to see you there.

Lyn Conley, UUA Trustee from the MSD

#### **-----IN GRATITUDE-----**

We have received the following thanks as a congregation:

“Our local group of "Church Women United" held its March meeting at UUCO. CWU is an international organization that has many good programs to benefit oppressed and disadvantaged women all over the world. As part of that mission, CWU shares quarterly services with local groups that are prepared by women all over the world. The March service was prepared by women in Papua New Guinea who have shown remarkable bravery and courage.

“UUCO hosted 23 visitors who were treated with good food and companionship provided by Helene Berton, Luanne Buchanan, Susie Pedigo, Mary Queyja, Skadi Snook, and Gail Stratton.

“Thanks to each of you from Ann Phillippi, longtime CWU member!”

And, in case you're not blushing enough from the praise, here's more, from our president-elect Terri Wright:

“I cannot begin to express how much my membership in UUCO has meant to me. We may not be able to change everyone in the world, but together we can touch many hearts and minds. So, if you have taken that step to becoming a member, THANK YOU! If not, please consider it, the world needs UUs!”

#### **--OTHER EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES--**

Susie Adams has passed on information about the visit of Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh and the Plum Village monastic delegation to the US, which includes a visit to Magnolia Village in Batesville.

They will arrive on August 30 and stay until September 2.

Magnolia Village invites you to find out more about Thich Nhat Hanh's visit and how you can participate. Magnolia Village is located at 123 Towles Road in Batesville, and you can contact them by e-mail at [magnoliavillage123@yahoo.com](mailto:magnoliavillage123@yahoo.com) or by phone at (662)-578-2077 or (662)-832-1818.

Other opportunities, from Terri Wright:

I wanted to remind everyone in our congregation that while I do not see UU members for counseling (because counselors need friends, too!), my colleague, Jaylene Whitehurst is in Oxford on Mondays and is more than happy to see anyone in our congregation who is in need of counseling services. Her contact number is 662-808-0902. Also, I am, at this time, taking new clients in my counseling practice. Therefore, if you have friends, family, or colleagues in need of counseling services, I hope you will consider me worthy of your recommendation.

#### -----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 CR145. -----

**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).

#### -----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 June newsletter by Friday, May 29. Please consider submitting an item. Thanks to Susie Adams, Anjel Craig, Elaine Gelbard, Enku Ide, Ann Phillippi, Gail Stratton and Terri Wright for their contributions. And thanks to Mary Queyja for serving as the editor's memory regarding at least one item in the newsletter!