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July/August 2011

## *The Good News*

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### Greetings!

From wherever we are across the planet as we read this, may we find inspiration and unity in the deepening of the Pentecost or Ordinary Time of the church year. It's a time to relax from the rush of the holy days. We hope this issue of the Good News will help center you, help your walk in the way of Jesus and religious freedom, and help cast your vision toward the UUCF program year.



This summer, through the revised common lectionary, we have been walking through the centuries with the Gospel of Matthew. Recently, the selections have lifted up the parable of the leaven, the story of the loaves and the fishes, and coming up will be Jesus and Peter's experience on the water. We will explore the encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman, Jesus asking the disciples who do they think he is, and finally for the last week of August the central call to take up the cross and follow Jesus; to lose one's life in



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order to gain a fuller life, for playing it safe and seeking to save one's life for one's self will be the path to losing it for sure.

One of the threads that weave these selections from Matthew together is a theme of choosing which kind of world we will follow, and discovering that God is not where God is supposed to be. In the heaven, God has relocated divine presence and power into that which was considered corruptible and corrupting in the world's eyes, in private acts and domestic situations instead of in big public acts. In the loaves and the fishes, the disciples wanted Jesus to send the crowd away back to the village, back to their usual world and its usual values shaped by the Empire, but Jesus shows them how the miracles can come in ordinary ways and times when we trust all will be well and find God in abundance spirit rather than acting out of a spirit of scarcity. When Peter begins to sink after walking on the water, Jesus points out that it is all a matter of trusting the Unseen, not the seen. In the ground-breaking story of an encounter with the woman from Syro-Phoenicia, Jesus himself first slips back into his default mode of how to treat people according to the ways of the dominant culture, only to be turned around by this mother in despair and frustration. Finally, in the admonitions that one would need to die a narrow Self in order to live and thrive more fully, we have set before us the way of the cross or the way of convenience.

We UU Christians and Jesus Followers know something about living in the state of what theologians call liminal space, where we are called to be influenced by various theologies and cultures and in turn to influence these peoples. We talk about having a foot in two, or more, worlds. It is central in some ways to who we are and how we are able to be the best disciples we can be. And yet these scriptures during these weeks call us also to commit, to choose to a world that is being transformed by Jesus, not Madison Avenue or the Pentagon; and to trust that this world, this worldview, will not only be enough for the have-nots but that their enough will overturn the greatest power ever known.

These July and August days of the year are calling out to us too to see what has been set before us, echoing Deuteronomy's charge to see how God has set life and death before

us so that we may choose Life in all its abundance and diversity and freedom, and to know that when we follow Jesus into the unexpected places and ways, questions and choices, we will not be alone. That is why the UUCF is here too, truly an unexpected place and people.

Thank you for making it so with your attention, your gifts, and your hopes.

Blessings of the season,  
Rev. Ron Robinson  
Executive Director, UUCF.

## General Assembly Sermon and Highlights

Charlotte, North Carolina, June 2011



We had some 140 people in attendance at our powerful dynamic UUCF Communion Service during General Assembly in Charlotte, North Carolina. Click to read the communion sermon, "**The Empty Temple**" by the Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, past president of the UUCF. Also, [here](#) is the order of service, which was based on one done at Revival in Fort Worth by the late Rev. Suzanne Meyer to whom this service was dedicated.

Here are some excerpts:

.....Ever since I became a Christian, I've had a fantasy about being able to visit the Holy Land, and particularly, the Holy City of Jerusalem. I know, I know, the good old UU hymn by Ed Wilson that so many of our churches sing asks the musical question "Where is our Holy Land? " and the right answer is supposed to be "within the human soul, wherever free minds truly seek with character the goal," but that holy land is too abstract for me. In my heart, I have a holy land! And it's a real place! It's the place where Jesus walked and taught. It's all the nearly places in my Bible that are as familiar to me as the names of the streets in the neighborhood where I live - Nazareth , the Sea of Galilee, Cana, Bethlehem, and of course Jerusalem. Because of the gift of sabbatical, my husband and I will be visiting Israel, Palestine and of course, Jerusalem; one the holiest and one of the most troubled

cities on earth.

....Jesus did not witness the destruction of the Temple, although he prophesized its end. You see, Jesus shared the opinion of the prophet Jeremiah about the temple of his day--that the people mistook the sign of the thing for the thing itself; mistook the temple for God . But Jesus had the mad courage to said, "No, I will be your dwelling place. I will be your dwelling place! If you abide with me it matters not where you call your home."

Jesus had this crazy idea idea that salvation is not in the temple, but not in the marketplace either -- not in the shopping mall, not in the convention center, not on Wall Street or Main Street, not in the office, not in the ice cream parlor, not in the grocery store, not at the gun convention, not in the movie theatre, not in the beauty salon, not on the golf course, but it is in HIM, and he said "let me be your dwelling place, for lo, I am with you, even at the end of time."

....Truly, Christian UU's have no dwelling place-we have no Holy of Holies-if we ever did, it's no longer in King's Chapel or even in Boston. If we are here, the Holy of Holies for our band of wanderers has to be right here now -- here in Room 203A & B- this has to be our temple.

And maybe not just here in this room -- maybe our temple is truly where we came from, where we live, whether in Tulsa, Oklahoma or in Akron, Ohio or in Cheyenne Wyoming -- everywhere the story of Jesus is told and heard and everywhere a Unitarian Universalist realizes I can be Christian and Unitarian Universalist and there is no division between the two - that's where our temple has to be....

## Summertime and the bills still need paying...

**Join, Renew, Support**

Summer for the UUCF is often a cut close to the bone financial time. This is



because one of our major budget expenses is General Assembly, a time when we reach out to let others know about the power and presence of the movement of Jesus and Freedom, and yet we get little income back from General Assembly, certainly nothing to offset our booth and program and staff expenses.

But GA is also a time when we meet with non-Christian UUs from across the country who are often finding out about us for the first time; we meet with them and talk about our history and about our diverse present and presence, and we hope we make it a little bit more welcoming for the UU Christians all across this continent. So even if you didn't go to GA, we think you will benefit from the UUCF being there.

During summertime, our membership renewals also seem to traditionally decline and people do not stay as current as at other times of the year.

We hope you will help us keep up our payroll and our services as we launch a new program year with an exciting **Revival** in Washington, D.C. and transitioning to an Online UU Christian Journal with insightful articles and interactive voices. We are also soon getting a new slate of Board of Directors (see online voting story below) that is excited about growing our movement, and who wants to work with you in our ministry teams and in small groups. We continue to seek to move the Executive Directorship back to a half time position as well.

Please **JOIN, RENEW,** and **SUPPORT** the UUCF. Make a quick, safe world-changing donation online, renew your membership, increase your membership level, and share with others whom you think would benefit from our mission and ministry.

## Revival 2011

### New Information



### Many Voices, Many Verses: Welcoming The Feminine in Christianity

Washington, D.C. area  
March 22-25, 2012

Our exciting plans for a fantastic, best yet, Revival, keep coming into fruition. We have

selected a wonderful and inexpensive host hotel for the area, the Hilton Garden Inn, in Fairfax, VA. It has a shuttle from the Metro line and is close to the UU Congregation of Fairfax where the events will be held. To keep current on new hotel information, including reservations in our block of rooms which have very reasonable pricing visit our **web site**.

You can read the new Revival **brochure**, download it, print it and send in your Registration right away. Get a gift for being one of the first ten to Register. Online registration will begin Dec. 15, 2011.

Help us spread the word about Revival. Pass the brochure along to others in your church and social networks. Organize a group to attend Revival and experience this spiritually uplifting time together. The growth, education and nurturing received a Revival is a wonderful way to deepen your personal journey with Jesus and invigorate your small groups.

Review the **Program** highlights and **Featured Presenter** information. Our **Schedule of Events** is also posted which contains a new element this year; all of our worship services will be free to the public. Check back as we will be continuing to add information, especially about our diverse and dynamic worship services, small groups and more.

This will be our 10th Revival gathering together, all in the spirit of the radically hospitable, liberating Jesus. Late March in the D.C. area, in an election year, will be a great time for free followers of a non-creedal faith to gather together and be a witness to the world.

Scholarships will be available to those in need.

Help us make those available by giving a **special donation**. Let us know as soon as possible if you will need one.

## Members to Vote on New Slate for Board of Directors

### Online and Paper Based Ballots and Feedback



If you are a current member with dues paid, you will be getting an online ticket to vote for the nominated slate of Board of Directors (Three new slots up for voting). On the online ballot there will also be a way to give us some quick feedback about ways you can support us with your talents and feedback. This is very important information for our continued growth so please take the time to complete the questions. If you are unsure about your current membership status, please send an email to **Rev. Ron Robinson**. We will also be sending paper ballots to those current members for whom we do not have current email addresses.

#### New or Returning Members Up For Election:

- The Rev. Betsy Schuereman, NJ, new three year term, ending 2014. Betsy has served for a year on the Board after coming in to fulfill the term for the late Rev. Suzanne Meyer. She has served on our Financial and Fundraising team.
- Ms. Kim Hampton, NY, new three year term, ending 2014. Kim has previously served on the UUCF Board and especially helped with General Assembly events. She has recently finished an intern minister year at First Parish in Worcester, MA. If elected, she will be serving again on our Events Team and helping coordinate General Assembly activities.
- The Rev. Mark Caggiano, MA, new three year term ending 2014. Mark is minister at First Church in Chestnut Hill, MA. If elected, he will be serving on our Membership/Communities Team.

If voted onto the Board, they will be joining these returning Officers and Directors.

#### Returning Officers:

- President: Mr. Dean Drake, MI, continuing, (ex-officio on any or all portfolio teams) serving as president

until 2012, followed by year as past president, ending 2013.

- Vice-President: Mr. Gil Guerrero, TX, continuing, (serving on Publications Team), ending 2012, then up for renewal for one more three year term.
- Secretary: The Rev. Kristen Grassel Schmidt, MA, continuing, (Membership/Communities), ending 2012, then up for renewal for one more three year term.
- Treasurer: Ms. Danielle Marx-Conwell, SC, continuing and ending 2012, (Fundraising) up for renewal for three year term afterwards.

Returning Board of Directors:

- Ms. Jennifer Sandberg, VA, continuing, ending 2013 (Events), then up for renewal for one more three year term
- The Rev. Tony Lorenzon (Publications), TX, ending 2013 then up for renewal for one more three year term.

Deep thanks to the Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, who recently finished her term as past president of the UUCF, previously serving as President, Officer and Director.  
addresses.

## President's Column by Mr. Dean A Drake

### Growing Up Is Hard to Do



Dean Drake

I used to think the question "What do you want to be when you grow up?" was only for children. Yet, here I am at the ripe old age of 63 still asking myself the same question. It's not that I haven't tried to find the answer: I am already on the third re-invention of my life (Dean 3.0, so to speak). Yet I

know that as long as God continues to grace me with the greatest gift of all - life - I will never be a completely finished person. I will always be growing up.

Similarly, the Christian Fellowship, just a few years older than I am, is still making that fundamental inquiry. Several years ago, the board met on retreat in Cleveland and tried to imagine where the Fellowship might be in five years. Many great ideas poured out:

- A greater web presence, with many activities like revival streamed worldwide on the web.
- A virtual congregation, like the Church of the Larger Fellowship, for Unitarian and Universalist Christians everywhere.
- More small groups and networking activities.
- A traveling Revival, setting up shop at UU churches throughout the country.

But children (even 60 something ones) tend to get ahead of themselves, and the board was no exception. Institutionally, our room was a mess. Our budget was perpetually in the red, and we had no process to correct it. With no standing teams or committees, serving on the Board was drudgery. We had no institutional memory, so each time we did something like Revival; it was like starting all over again. So before we could play and have fun with grand ideas, we came out of that retreat recognizing that we had to get our house in order first.

The board went to work, and even though we had some growing pains, we have made some amazing leaps forward. We have a finance team and a balanced budget. Revival and GA planning is now on-going, and we get better at it each year. We have new by-laws and are implementing a new on-line election process to make the Fellowship more democratic. We have replaced the old Good News with an on-line version and a new print journal. And we are beginning to plan our next board retreat a little over a year from now: one where we can start to imagine what we can build on the institutional foundation we created over the last couple of years.

During the next year, we will engage our members to join us in deciding what the next version of the UUCF will be like. Who are we being called to serve, and what does God expect us to do for them? What old ideas have served their purpose and need to be set aside, and what new ideas can we embrace that will excite and spiritually enrich us? And perhaps is it time for a new name that reflects what we are becoming?

The Christian Fellowship is 66 years old. Yet in the 2,000 year old religious tradition we are part of, that makes us a mere newborn. Thus, it is fair to ask: what does this baby want to be when it grows up?

## Virtual Monastery

Kim Beyer-Nelson, July 2011



Here is a part of the July **Virtual Monastery meditation** on our website by Kim Beyer-Nelson; check back throughout the month for the weekly commentaries on biblical passages, and use them for your own study, reflection, prayer, and response in the world.

Julian of Norwich once said, "And all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." Each phrase calls us down into the root of the storm, which lies deeper than the weather, the waves and sleeplessness, and points us directly to the state of our minds. Julian would have been comfortable with the Jesus of this passage, sleeping in the rocking ship, riding the waves and wind of consciousness with the ease of a child.

And when he is awakened from his rest by the fearful disciples, he shows them how he works with mind, how he chooses to face the riot of wave-thoughts and wind-words, not with anger or resistance or fear, but with firm resolve born of confidence in the I AM. But notice, he demonstrates his method out of compassion for their fear, not out of his own.

And this is terrifying to the disciples, more terrifying in the end than the wind and waves of consciousness. Buddha was also approached on the road once by a wide-eyed traveler who asked if he was a ghost or an angel or even a god. And Buddha replied simply, "I am awake."

In this case, the message beneath the water and wind shows the disciples are not so much terrified of Jesus, but of what he is asking them in turn to exemplify. It is one thing to turn again and again to an outside source for our comfort, but quite another to know that you, yourself, are that comfort. This understanding does require faith, and Jesus once again asks them why they seem to have none. He is pointing back at their highest selves, their connection to the I AM, but they

are still only able to see his finger, not that which he trying to call them to.

What he is still calling all of us to.

Amen

## Time to Start A Small Group of UU Christians/Jesus Followers in Your Community

### Resources for Small Groups



Now is the time to begin planning, working and reaching out to others in your church or community. Draw from multiple churches, as well as from the non-

churched. Join together for study, service, social justice, and worship in the progressive Christian tradition we pioneered, continue to grow and present to the world through our small group ministry.

You can get a packet of free materials to help you begin your group or receive loaned videos from our Lending Library to use in discussion groups. Just send an email request to **Rev. Ron Robinson**. Visit our **Small Group Resources** online to learn about the many ways to create your own Christian or Jesus Following small groups. You can help not only yourself but others grow spiritually in their journey; this also helps UUCF spread as well.

Let us know what your group is doing too. We would be glad to help promote your activities on our website.

Address: P.O. Box 6702, Turley, OK 74156-0702

Phone: (918) 794-4637

[www.uuchristian.org](http://www.uuchristian.org)

[info@uuchristian.org](mailto:info@uuchristian.org)

We are non-creedal followers of Jesus rooted in the history and tradition of Unitarian Universalism. All who wish to freely follow Jesus are welcome to be members of the UUCF.

**Sincerely,**

Ron Robinson

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