



The Religious Leader

NEWS FROM THE MINISTRY AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP STAFF GROUP • WINTER 2003

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The Narcissistic Leader

“**Ego Makes the Leader**, Second Edition” is the teaser used by Harvard Business School on its website for a collection of materials on leadership. The descriptor continues as follows:

What makes a leader great? Consider ego size. The authors featured in this collection investigate the impact of ego on leadership from several angles:

Narcissistic: Leaders with over-size egos can be very good for business—especially during times of transition. Gifted strategists and courageous risk-takers, they drive their companies to greatness. But they also have a dark side that can obliterate their careers—and their companies.

Humble and resolved: The most effective leaders don't flaunt their egos—they suppress them for their companies' sake. Though humble and often painfully shy, they're also iron-willed.

Authentic: The size of a leader's ego matters less than his or her authenticity. Inspirational leaders communicate their virtues and flaws to followers—revealing their true selves, ego and all.

So what kind a leader are you? What kind of a leader am I—if that's not too narcissistic a question? What kinds of leaders are needed in

a healthy UU congregation or in an organization serving the community? I'm more and more convinced that among the key factors in effective religious leadership are the linked abilities to be able to: (a) get above the turmoil to see what is happening so one can offer leadership that is effective, substantive, and compassionate and (b) be aware enough of one's own leadership style or styles to recognize one's own blind spots and strengths, so one can count on support and corrective suggestions (i.e., criticism) in order to grow and become a better leader over time.

I'm also convinced that leadership skills can be learned—and unlearned when necessary—over time. Part of this growth can come if we can admit the mistakes we make and learn from them. Some of it can come from disciplined self-reflection. More can emerge from hearing what trusted colleagues and friends have to tell you. And some can come through guided study.

We in Ministry and Professional Leadership are here to do what we can to support the growth of your leadership skills and to work on our own. When we talk of credentialing or continuing education, of mentoring or personal counsel, of available resources or interesting URLs, we do so to make you a better narcissistic leader, a stronger humble and resolved leader, and/or a more effective authentic leader. We hope you will do the same for us.

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Thank you for your leadership and for your ego strength, for your self-doubt and your humility, all of which contribute so much to our common ministry and service. It is good to be engaged in this most

challenging and rewarding work with you. ●

Regards,
David Hubner, Director of Ministry
and Professional Leadership

Ministerial Credentialing/Internship Clearinghouse—

David Pettee, Christine May, Griffith Bell, Ken Olliff

Ministerial Formation

I'm recently returned from a trip to the west coast, where I met with nearly forty students preparing for our ministry from three seminaries. I was quite impressed with the women and men I met, all serious about their call to our ministry. It is a privilege to get to know future ministers on the front end of a long journey. Sometimes, while I was sitting with these folks, there was the temptation to believe that the primary purpose of the credentialing process is to prepare to meet with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee! But when you stop to ask ministers if they became unshakably grounded in their sense of ministerial authority and identity after seeing the MFC, most will chuckle, if not burst into laughter. The full formation of a minister often takes many years. For many, the first two years in ministry are the most challenging. Newly minted ministers notice their sense of mastery and confidence ebb and flow, while the people, be they in a congregation or in a community setting, expect that a minister be fully formed. It is this intersection, or liminal space, where integration or trouble emerges. Joy and woe are woven fine.

For many seminarians, the ministerial formation experience is often a time of serious self-reflection and questioning, as it should be. Being "called" to the professional ministry, however one may understand this mysterious process, demands an unusual level of respect and consid-

eration. Unlike other professions, a failed ministry risks wreaking havoc on a religious community for years, if not generations, to come. I trust most are aware of this dynamic, and if not, do get a hold of a copy of Edwin H. Friedman's *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (it's on the MFC reading list!) for both personal and professional edification. While the case is strong for the need for introspection, seminary is also the time for thinking long-term. There are professional habits that need to be formed, and the first year of ministerial leadership is too late to begin. I offer four hopefully pertinent observations to address this need.

1. Become familiar with the UUMA Guidelines and the Code of Professional Practice. Not only may the MFC question your knowledge about this area of competence, once you are in candidacy status, you are bound by these guidelines, and your future colleagues will expect you to honor them. Sadly, a new ministry occasionally runs off the road when these guidelines are ignored, and ignorance is not an acceptable defense.
2. Become literate with the MFC Rules and Policies. The workings of the Association's credentialing body are more than just fulfilling an important adjudicatory function. Some candidates

wait to read this material on the eve of an MFC interview, and discover that any and all kinds of prefellowship ministries, as a student ministry, for a summer, as a ministerial consultant, or contract ministry, require clearance from the Ministerial Credentialing Office. It's no fun trying to explain this to the MFC at the last moment.

3. We have all heard that real estate is about "location, location, location." The corollary for professional ministry is "relationship, relationship, relationship." Get a headstart on treating your fellow classmates as your future colleagues. You're going to need them when the surf gets rough! Time and time again through your hopefully long and dynamic career, you will encounter and reencounter the same people. Maybe someday they will work for you or you will work for them! Be very attentive and responsible to address your issues and behaviors that risk driving others away or keep you at arms' length from everybody else. Now is the time to get to know your edges and discover effective coping strategies, along with the ability to articulate clearly what you have learned.
4. Don't forget that there are colleagues who await you. There are many ministers anxious to assist you toward becoming a fine minister. Just ask! Perhaps one colleague will stand out as a great person for mentorship during your years of preliminary fellowship. When you are attending a colleague's church, make the effort to introduce yourself, which is just another way to remind you that you ought not take on any leadership within a congregation without the minister being supportive! When you are able to do so (because this varies by ministerial chapter), make every effort to attend meetings and retreats.

Professional Days are also an excellent time to introduce yourself to your future colleagues. Perhaps an internship opportunity might surface. Finally, ordinations, installations, and building dedications are also fine opportunities to meet your future colleagues, and your presence will be appreciated! ●

In the Faith,
David Pettee,
Ministerial Credentialing Director

From the Internship Clearinghouse

At the moment we are in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the 2004–2005 internship search and selection process. Yet every once in a while it's useful to take a step back from the day-to-day tasks of your work and look at the bigger picture—to proverbially lift your head above the cornstalks and survey the landscape. In that spirit, here's a report on what's been going on in at the Internship Clearinghouse over the past months.

Combined with consultation with the Internship Clearinghouse Coordinator and the Ministerial Credentialing Director, the Clearinghouse's on-line presence has proven very useful for students, congregations, and schools, and in the last years has increasingly provided a central forum for information about UU internships. The website now includes an on-line database of congregations offering internships, a site for students to register their internship preferences, and a variety of written resources and links for different aspects of the internship process.

An important development at the Clearinghouse over the past months has been a close collaboration with the field education offices at Meadville Lombard and Starr King. The Clearinghouse and the two schools jointly sponsored two GA workshops on internships this year, which were well attended. Further, we have jointly recommended applica-

tion, selection, and notification dates for congregations to follow in the internship search process in order to help alleviate problems that students face when different sites follow different schedules. We have adjusted the deadline for this year's internship stipend grant to accommodate these earlier deadlines. I've also begun to work with field education offices from non-UU schools in order to coordinate the school's and the UUA's internship requirements to benefit UU students who attend these seminaries.

Two particular issues related to internships have been given particular attention recently: hybrid (combination parish and community) internships and off-site supervision. Suggested guidelines for what constitutes a valid hybrid internship arrangement have been incorporated into the internship manual and sample Learning/Serving Agreements from previous successful hybrid internships were posted on the website. Also, the Ministerial Credentialing Office worked with the Candidacy Working Group of the MFC to establish requirements that must be met for an off-site supervisory experience to meet the MFC's internship requirement.

The internship stipend grant program has awarded \$26,450 to six congregations for 2003–2004.

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This past year witnessed a slight decrease in the total number of internships available, mostly due to the current economic downturn—a number of sites withdrew their applications in the middle of the year because of budget problems. Overall, however, the average stipend paid by congregations has

increased, and the UUA board of trustees recently adopted a revised set of full-time stipend recommendations: \$1,200/month for congregations of less than 250 members; \$1,300 for 250 to 499 members; \$1,400 for congregations of 500 to 749 members; and \$1,500 for congregations with 750+ members.

So that's where we've been. As always, I'm happy to hear from you and am only a phone call or e-mail away! ●

Faithfully,
Ken Olliff,
Internship Clearinghouse
Coordinator

Religious Education Credentialing—Beth Williams, Emily Farbman

Model for Small Group Learning

Part of the life of professional religious leaders, especially religious educators, is to continue to develop their professional skills, move forward in their faith journey, learn about current trends in their own and related professions, and incorporate this learning into their professional practice. As a professional religious educator you may attend trainings, workshops, seminars, conferences, lectures, and other structured learning experiences. How can you strengthen and expand your learning? What can you do to demonstrate what you have learned and include this demonstration in your RE Credentialing portfolio?

What follows is a model for a small-group reflection process to be used in conjunction with the types of learning opportunities mentioned above. It was developed with Rev. Makaanah Morriss, President of LREDA, and is based on Thomas Groome's praxis model of action and reflection. While conceived as a group process, it can be adapted for an individual learning project.

At the end of your structured learning experience, set aside 2½ to 3 hours for a group reflection process.

1. Open with a reading that pertains in some way to the structured learning experience. Silently reflect on this reading for a few minutes.
2. Pose questions to the group about the learning experience. Members of the group should silently reflect on these questions for 30 minutes or more while informally journaling or jotting down impressions and answers. A suggestion of questions to be posed is:
 - a. Based on your own understanding and experience, with what from this learning experience do you agree? With what do you disagree?
 - b. What questions remain or are raised for you from this learning experience?
 - c. What information, understanding, or perspectives would you add?
 - d. Has this learning experience been presented using an anti-oppression/anti-racism/diversity lens? If so, how? If not, what considerations and questions should be raised in order to open such a lens on this subject?
- e. How has this experience touched your personal journey?
- f. What are the implications of this learning for you as a religious professional?
3. Members now share their responses with the others in the group. You may want to have already set process guidelines for this section. You may decide, for example, how long and in what order each group member may speak. Each member should note what new questions or understandings arise for them from this process. Allow 45 minutes or more for this process.
4. Based on their initial reflections and informed by the discussion, each group member writes a more formally structured reflection paper based on the previous questions. This paper may be 3–4 handwritten pages or 1–2 typed pages. Allow 45 minutes or more for this process.
5. Each group member chooses a feedback partner to review their paper. In the review process the feedback partner considers what important learning, questions, and implications they found included in the paper, and on what the writer may want to give further consideration. The partner then shares the feedback with the group member. Allow 30 minutes or more for this process.
6. Each group member revises their paper, identifying and integrating the feedback they have received, and develops an action plan on how to integrate these learning into their professional practice. This may be “take-away” work or you may want to allocate 45 minutes or more for the process.
7. An optional step: Each member chooses an accountability partner to help them monitor how their action plan is put into practice.

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- At home or at work a typed description of the structured learning experience is created. The revised reflection paper and action plan is typed. Any demonstration of how the plan was actually put into professional practice is documented, including work sample materials resulting from professional practice. All are included in the appropriate section of the RE Credentialing Portfolio.

The process is to help you get the most out of your learning opportunity. There is no way that you can fail in this process, nor in your reflection paper and action plan. We anticipate that this process will be adapted to suit your particular needs. But whatever your approach, we encourage you to include reflection and feedback components. May your professional journey be enriched. ●

—Beth Williams,
Religious Education Credentialing Director

Professional Development Opportunities of Interest to Religious Educators

Meadville/Lombard Winter Institute, February 19–21, 2004, University of Wisconsin campus at Madison, WI. Dr. Sharon D. Welch presenting “Being Good Neighbors in a Brave New World: Truth, Justice, and Jazz.” Note the new title. Renowned jazz pianist James Williams will perform on Friday night and accompany Sharon in her presentation on Saturday. Stay all of Saturday for an optional add-on day: “In the Classroom with Sharon Welch: Putting Theory into Practice.”

“It’s no wonder that Sharon Welch finds inspiration for her thinking in jazz. Jazz’s beauty is inherently ironic, simultaneously improvised, yet structured, soloists expressing themselves as part of a group. Welch’s worldview is also inherently ironic—she’s a postmodernist who draws inspiration from the beauty of nature. And anyone who has experienced one of her lectures appreciates her skill as a performer—and improviser.”—Tom Stites, Editor-in Chief, *UU World*.

For more information about Meadville/Lombard Winter Institute contact Joan McDougall at jmcdougall@meadville.edu or 773-256-3000, ext. 222.

A reminder that modest amounts of financial aid are available for many professional development opportunities for those serving Unitarian Universalist congregations as lay religious education professionals. For more information and an application form, please contact Emily Farbman, RE Credentialing Assistant, at efarbman@uua.org or 617-948-6418. ●

A Message from the Religious Education Credentialing Committee

The Religious Education Credentialing Committee (RECC) held its first meeting in Sacramento, CA during the first week of October. The committee, when all appointments are confirmed by the UUA Board of Trustees, will be composed of a credentialed religious educator, a minister of religious education, a parish minister, a representative from the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA), and three lay leaders.

Our first meeting was a combined organizational meeting, team building session, committee training, working session, and anti-racism/anti-oppression/multi-cultural training. We invited our anti-racism trainers, Paula Cole Jones and Janice Marie Johnson, to facilitate our meeting, except the confidential items, so that we could learn how to apply what we learned to all the work we will do. We all left the meeting feeling that the combination of trainings was a real benefit to the committee. In our work, we struggled with how to address issues of access to academic coursework, cost in money and time, and issues of professional experience as we discussed guidelines for equivalencies. We began a serious discussion of the meaning of the credentialing levels and their names. We also discussed our processes as a committee. As the guidelines developed by the committee become available, they will be available on-line and from the Religious Education Credentialing Office. ●

Liz Jones,
Chair, RECC

Starr King School for the Ministry

On-line: “On-line UU History” (Alicia Forsey) will be offered again in the spring of 2004, along with three new on-line courses: “Our Theological House: An Introduction to Theology for Unitarian Universalists” (developed by Rebecca Parker, on-line instructor to be announced); “The Beautiful Blue Ball: Community Ministry at Work in the World”; and “World Religions” (instructor to be announced).

Opportunities

As of October 22 some 25 search committees have posted Congregational Records on the UUA Settlement System, available to all ministers in fellowship and all students in candidate status at www.uua.org/programs/ministry/settlement/tools.html. Instructions for going on-line are in the *Settlement Handbook*, available at the same address.

Unlike last year, a significant number of the congregations seeking ministers for 2004 are offering financial packages in the D and E ranges. Posted so far are the CRs of these distinguished congregations: San Diego, CA, Belmont, Lexington, and Winchester, MA, Princeton, NJ, and Rochester, NY.

There are also, already posted, a number of sweet opportunities for newer ministers and ministers wanting to serve more modest but still healthy enterprises. There are more to come. Only some 40 percent of the congregations I expect to post CRs have yet done so. Those that have not yet will almost certainly do so before November 1.

You might wish to know, too, that to date, only 57 ministers are chasing these 25 opportunities. I encourage search committees to identify their “short list” of three or four precandidates before the Christmas break. Many won’t, of course, but a good many do, at which time the opportunities for ministers narrow. Thus, even if you are only possibly interested in moving, now is the time for exploration.

Please feel free to contact me with your questions and concerns. Please read the *Settlement Handbook* first, however, since many of your questions are anticipated therein. Among the things it will assure you of: As you progress in your mutual consideration with a search committee, feel free to contact, too, the District Executive, the interim minister, former ministers, and UUMA chapter members. As international events now make plain, those who do not gather accurate intelligence before making strategic decisions will have the results of their ignorance thrust upon them, to their cost. Nevertheless, every year ministers who did not think it worth their while to check a congregation out accept a call. Is it any wonder that 5 percent of new ministries fail within three years?

Not a note to end on, that one. So this:

From time to time ministers wonder: Should I leave? Is it ethical to leave? By leaving do I betray them? My counsel is that ministry is a career as well as a calling, and that if a particular ministry is beginning to wear on you, it has likely been wearing on others for some time. Either juice it up or look around. Or both: Many colleagues will tell you that there’s nothing like several months in search to remind you of why you’re serving right where you are.

May your ministries flourish! ●

John Weston,
Settlement Director

Professional Development—Michelle Bentley, Jean Hartman

Imani

Rewrite this newsletter article from my seat in a jet plane that is trying its best to land in Boston’s Logan Airport. The winds off the ocean are blowing hard. In the midst of all of this, the pilot just told this mainly Boston crowd that the Boston Red Sox were tied in the eighth against the New York Yankees. The Boston folk on the plane are happy. I think about saying “Go Cubbies,” but I think better of it. I keep quiet. The man sitting in the window seat next to me has been on his cell phone ever since the flight attendant told us to turn them off. I gave him twenty minutes of text messaging and finally told him his actions made me nervous. The plane is bouncing all over the place, we continue to make circle eights because we are unable to land, and I am scared. I begin to pray. Through prayer, my thoughts turn from fear and death to thoughts of life and joy and I begin to think of the other plane rides I’ve taken so far this church year. All

were smooth rides. I realized the trips were to attend gatherings of celebrations.

I happened to have on me a copy of Howard Thurman’s meditations on *The Mood of Christmas* and turned to the following declaration: “There is a need in the human spirit for the acknowledgment of life. It is the act of celebration that gives a personal and collective awareness of the place and significance of the individual in the stream of living things, in the flow of life itself.”

During the two first quarters of the church year, I had the pleasure and honor to participate and journey with many of you as you celebrated milestones and new beginnings: Ministerial Fellowship Committee interviews and renewals and final awards, ordinations, and installation services of celebration. Congratulations to all who made these transitions!

Another very important celebration this fall was the anti-racism training sessions that both the MFC and Congregational Services New Church Starts held. Even

though the substance of these gatherings was difficult at times, the sharing of stories and the envisioning of new paradigms, which will deepen and broaden how we do ministry and church, brings hope and an occasion to lift up and to celebrate.

As a member of the UUMA's CENTER committee, I traveled to the west coast for our fall meeting. We gather to discuss how to best celebrate life of ministry during the 2004 and the 2005 Pre-GA Professional Days.

I was also among the guests invited to attend the fall meeting of the Panel on Theological Education. This gathering was the first meeting of major stakeholders (UUA President, Meadville Lombard Theological School, Starr King School For the Ministry, Harvard Divinity School, UUA board representatives, MFC, CENTER, LREDA, and Ministry and Professional Leadership) around the same table to discuss common themes and practices of continuing

education for us all. This gathering is an occasion to be celebrated.

The various organizations and departments concerned with professional religious leadership are coming together to think and plan as a whole and this is definitely something to celebrate.

If you would like further conversation on anything I've reported, please do not hesitate to write or phone me. I invite your calls.

The news just in has it that the Boston Red Sox won their game and the race for the American League pennant is tied at three games each. The plane has also just landed safely. Both Boston and I are celebrating.

This is the season of long nights, stillness, reflection, and thanksgiving, and it is the season for Imani (faith). ●

—Michelle Bentley,
Professional Development Director

Continuing Education Opportunities

Practical suggestions for continued learning, sabbatical planning, life and skill enhancement may be found in the listing posted on the Ministry web page (www.uua.org/ministry/). There you will find the basic information of workshops, conferences, and seminars.

Some offerings by our colleagues include:

Professional Chaplains. Contact: Timothy Madison at 618-549-0721, ext. 65243 or tim.madison@sih.net.

Richard C. Borden Sermon Award, submissions accepted from January 1 through March 15, 2004. Contact: Michelle Bentley at 773-643-6988 or mbentley@uua.org.

Meadville Lombard Winter Institute: Being Good Neighbors in a Brave New World: Truth, Justice, and Jazz, February 19–21, 2004, Sharon Welch, presenter. Contact: Joan McDougall at jmcdougall@meadville.edu or 773-256-3000, ext. 222.

Healing from Oppression: Interpersonal, Identity-Based, and Political, March 5–7, 2004, San Francisco State University, Dr. Selena Sermeno and Dr. Charlie Clements, presenters. Contact: Margi McCue, President, UU Community Ministry Center at mccue@pdx.edu.

First-Year Ministers' On-line Seminar, April 12–23, 2004. Contact: Michelle Bentley at 773-643-6988 or mbentley@uua.org or Jean Hartman at 617-948-6437 or jhartman@uua.org.

Course Selections on Healing Ministry, May 2003–2004, various locations and levels, sponsored by the Association of Professional Chaplains. Contact: Linda Smith at 303-467-7829 or visit www.HTSpiritualMinistry.com.

Negros Island, The Philippines, study-tour conference, February 22–28, 2004, Dumagete City, The Philippines, sponsored by ICUU and UUPCC. Contact: UUPCC (www.uua.org/uupcc) or ICUU (www.uua.org/icuu) websites.

Pathways to Peace: The Wisdom of Listening, the Power of Commitment, July 7–13, 2004, Barcelona, Spain, sponsored by Parliament of the World's Religions. Contact: CPWR, P.O. Box 1630, Chicago, IL 60690 or visit www.cpwr.org.

Considering Ministry? Considering Loans?

This is a personal expression only. I hope that colleagues who talk with persons considering ministry as a vocation will be candid and forthright about the financial consequences of such a decision. The UUA recommends that anyone thinking about ministry have a conversation with a minister already in this line of work. This is a time for truth telling, and colleagues have a responsibility for describing this calling in honest terms—including money.

We are encouraged by the increased interest in personal finances by seminarians. We are being invited to speak to students in seminaries and at retreats about personal finances. However, for some of these good people, trouble looms as a result of financial commitments already made. Retirement and other savings have sometimes been cashed in. Debts have incurred that will run far into the years ahead.

The underlying finances of graduate education have shifted dramatically in recent years. Those of us who were students in the 60s and 70s financed our education by scholarships, savings, family support, and part-time employment. Today we find many graduate students largely funding education through student loans and credit card debt, even when they also have another wage earner in the family and a part-time job. Scholarships provide a lesser percentage of needed income than in the past. Banks are eager to lend money and create debt they know will not be erased by bankruptcy.

Of colleagues who applied for UUA Debt Reduction Grants last year, 20 had loan balances over \$40,000. Forty-one owed more than \$20,000. Some of the debt amounts were staggering. And this is seminary debt only, not including mortgages, car payments, or credit card balances. Federally subsidized student loans can be obtained for up to \$8,500 each year; nonsubsidized loans in greater amounts are almost dropped on students from the trees. It is so easy for students to get in over their heads and owe monthly repayments they simply cannot manage on the wages of a minister.

Yes, interest rates have reached an all-time low, for student loans as well as mortgages. Student loans can be consolidated today at interest rates of three percent, reducing the monthly amount due but often stretching out the number of payments for up to 30 years. And any interest paid to the bank—even at only three percent—represents dollars no longer available for other purposes.

Instead of accumulating additional debt, our practice should run in the opposite direction: prepaying more dol-

lars than are demanded, so that the term of the loan will be shortened and the interest amount reduced.

A \$30,000 student loan at three percent interest will demand 120 monthly payments of \$289.69, an amount that feels reasonable to someone who hasn't looked at the bottom line after housing, insurance premiums, and taxes have been subtracted from clergy compensation.

Increasing the monthly payment to \$350 reduces the term of the loan to 97 payments and saves \$956.07 in interest. Paying \$450 per month on the loan (from weddings perhaps) shortens the term to 73 payments and saves \$1,902.56 in interest.

This same principle applies to mortgages and credit cards, especially credit cards that ask for monthly payments of only two to 2.5 percent of the outstanding balance. At that rate, it may take over 20 years to pay off the balance even without making one more purchase. Adding \$25 more than the minimum to a credit card payment is like investing \$25 at 12 to 18 percent gain, which is a great return on investment today.

Two new books I highly recommend are *Guide to Surviving Debt* by the National Consumer Law Center, \$19.00, 617-542-9595, www.consumerlaw.org; and *Guide to Investing Success* by Ted Miller and published by Kiplinger's, \$17.95, www.kiplinger.com. These books are gold mines of essential information for anyone in financial difficulty now or who wants a healthier financial future.

Debt Reduction Grants

The forms are at www.uua.org/programs/ministry/finances. The application deadline is January 15, 2004. We hope to have \$100,000 from the Living Tradition Fund to distribute in February to ministers in fellowship with student loan payments greater than \$100 per month.

Fair Compensation User's Guide

This document was mailed to all congregations on or about November 1. It explains the steps that congregations should take in order to implement the 2004 salary recommendations for ministers and other church staff. See the above website and click on "Compensation" for the data.

Did the Treasurer Send the Check?

We are now in the last quarter of 2003, and it is important that retirement contributions for this calendar year to be up-to-date. Be sure to review the three quarterly statements mailed by Fidelity this year to participants in the UUA Retirement Plan. Can't find them? Call Fidelity at 800-343-0860 and ask about contributions received. Other retirement plan questions go to Joyce Stewart at jstewart@uua.org or 617-948-6421.

Dental Insurance Rate Increase

This took effect October 1, and memos were included in the monthly statements sent to churches with staff enrolled in the life, long-term disability, and dental insurance programs. There were no increases this year in the

life or LTD policies. Tracy Withy-Browne has more information about the UU Group Insurance programs at twithy@uua.org or 617-948-6401. •

—Ralph Mero,
Church Staff Finances Director

Resources & Possibilities

Report from the Ministerial Fellowship Committee

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee met in Boston from September 24–28, 2003. Committee members added a day to their meeting time to participate in a day devoted to anti-racism/anti-oppression training, facilitated by Paula Cole Jones, a consultant with the UUA Congregational Services Staff Group, and Rev. Josh Pawelek, who serves the Unitarian Universalist Society of East Manchester, CT as parish minister. As a result of this very productive day, the committee developed a series of plans and “next steps,” some of which were implemented during the meeting following, and others that are under development. One such implementation was the use of a process observer, who listened for language, decisions, and so on, that reflected anti-racism and anti-oppression issues, and reported on those at the end of the meeting on Sunday afternoon.

Over the course of the two-and-a-half days of interviews, two panels met with a total of twenty-five candidates. Nineteen of those received Category I decisions, while the others were given decisions reflecting various degrees of recommendations.

The three Working Groups (Candidacy, Settlement, and Process) reported on projects and recommendations. The committee adopted the following policy: “All candidates who wish to request a waiver of the MFC requirements must arrange to have the waiver request considered at a

meeting held in advance of their MFC interview.” It is the intention of this policy that the committee will not be considering waivers at the same meeting that the candidate appears for an interview.

Another adopted policy reflects discussion around the “open UUA” discussion. “In the interest of improved communication and service to our congregations and at the discretion of the chair, portions of the business meeting will be open to observers for consistent and published periods of time.” Although details have not been decided upon at this writing, it is expected that a portion of the December business meeting will be open to observers, and that the timing and agenda of the open portion will be posted on the MFC website, which is www.uua.org/programs/ministry/mfc. I plan to post this information by November 3, 2003.

The Report of the UUMA Task Force on Categories, which is available on the website www.uuma.org, was discussed and appreciation was extended to Carolyn Owen-Towle, who served as MFC liaison to that group, as well as David Pettee, another TF member, for the quality and usefulness of recommendations. A subgroup of the MFC will meet a day early in Berkeley to continue work on an implementation plan.

Twenty-nine ministers were voted first renewal of preliminary fellowship, 21 received second renewals, and 11 were granted third and final renewals. The MFC will meet in Berkeley, CA, December 3–7, 2003. Any questions or com-

ments may be addressed to mfc@uua.org. •

Phyllis Daniel, Chair

If You Received Ministerial Fellowship More Than a Decade Ago, This Is for You!

On a regular basis, I field calls from colleagues who admit to feeling out of the loop after being asked by a ministerial applicant or an aspirant or a candidate for assistance with their upcoming RSCC interview, to be sponsored by their congregation or for mentorship. Much has changed since the early 1990s for those preparing for ministerial fellowship. I thought it might be productive to briefly outline a few of the newer requirements for those who seek UU ministerial fellowship, although this list is not meant to be exclusive.

RSCC or Regional Sub-Committee on Candidacy: Since July 1, 1999 anyone entering theological school (or wanting to transfer in from another faith tradition) desiring ministerial fellowship has been required to meet with an RSCC. There are six RSCCs located around North America, each staffed by an administrator who is supervised by a field staff person. Each RSCC has both clergy and laypeople, ranging from seven to ten members. An *applicant* is someone who has contacted the Ministerial Credentialing Office or the appropriate RSCC Administrator, and has expressed a desire to pursue ministerial fellowship. An *aspirant* is someone who

has enrolled in theological school or is a transfer, has completed the necessary paperwork (including a biography), and has met with a UU minister, who completes a written reference. Upon the completion of a career assessment, and with written agreement to abide by MFC Rules and Policies, the aspirant can make an appointment with an RSCC.

The RSCC interview has many parallels with the MFC interview. Each RSCC is charged to give each aspirant early, honest, and direct feedback regarding their potential for UU ministry. The RSCC determines whether an aspirant is granted *candidacy* status (green light), needs to make a return appointment after addressing a specific concern (yellow light), or is denied candidacy status (red light). In addition, as part of the preparation for the RSCC interview, aspirants are required to give the names of four references that a member of the RSCC, prior to the RSCC interview, might call for information.

Sponsorship by a UU congregation: The purpose of this requirement is to ensure familiarity on the part of our UU ministers with UU congregational life, and to encourage congregations to play a more responsible role in the recruitment, preparation, and assessment of our future ministers. Once a student has been granted candidacy status, they need to obtain congregational sponsorship. Congregations willing to sponsor a student do so in a number of ways, including offering financial support, opportunities to preach, mentoring possibilities, or access to leadership challenges.

Mentoring: Since 1991, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee has required all newly preliminarily fellowshiped ministers to find a mentor. This important relationship is required through all three renewals toward final fellowship, and is confidential in nature with no reports to the MFC, other than confirmation that the relationship exists.

UUMINS2B: This is a closed, unmoderated list serve managed by the Ministerial Credentialing Office for the benefit of aspirants and can-

didates who share ideas and concerns regarding preparation for ministerial fellowship.

Please feel free to contact me or Chris May with any further questions! ●

In the Faith,
David Pettee

UUMA Spiritual Retreat

Last year's Pre-GA spiritual retreat was a good experience for attendees, so another is being planned for 2004. It will have a similar structure; three days, from Saturday afternoon to Tuesday afternoon June 19–22, 2004. The retreat will include worship, spiritual sharing groups, structured meditation time (around a fireplace!), workshops, time to commune with nature at the beach and in the hills of California, and plenty of free time for rest, reading, and reflection. One day will be a silent day. The retreat center is owned by the Crystal Cathedral and is located in San Juan Capistrano. It has motel-style housing and is handicapped accessible. Spouses who wish to fully participate in the program are invited to this retreat. The cost will be \$300 for the three days. Scholarships are available through Michelle Bentley. Get a registration form by contacting Christine Robinson 505-885-1801 or crobinson@uuma.org. If there is someone who is familiar with Southern California who would like to act as local arrangements person for this retreat, please contact Christine. Watch for more details later in the year. ●

For Community Ministers

Just prior to GA 2003, David Pettee (MPLSG) and Jeanne Lloyd (Society for The Larger Ministry) jointly published an article called "Steps Toward Final Fellowship for Community Ministers," identifying the specific steps whereby Community Ministers

can move from preliminary fellowship to final fellowship. The twofold purpose of the article is to: (1) educate and empower community ministers to successfully reach final fellowship as it is defined at this point in time; and (2) educate all ministers settled in congregations in order that we, as ministers, may collegially support one another. Ministers of all categories are therefore encouraged to read the article, which is posted on the UUA website at www.uua.org/programs/ministry/community/ and on the SLM website at www.slm.siteblast.com/links.asp?id=16149&page=4. Please direct questions or comments to David Hubner at dhubner@uua.org.

Additionally, The Society for The Larger Ministry, the UU Community Ministry Center, and the UUMA Community Ministry Focus Group are sponsoring the development of a book on Unitarian Universalist Community Ministry. The first stage of the effort is supported by a grant from the Fund for Unitarian Universalism. The goal of this book is to define and explore community ministry through history, theology, and models of ministry and congregational affiliation. We hope this book will be a significant resource for congregations, seminars, ministers, and lay people, helping them to better understand the potential for community ministry within our UU movement. We ask that you will join in supporting this project by contributing your stories and writings. Your contributions will be the flesh and blood of the book. The Coordinating Editor of the book is Rev. Dr. Dorothy Emerson, reachable at revemerson@aol.com. Please let Dr. Emerson know as soon as possible if you would like to contribute to this book. The deadline for all submissions is January 31, 2004.

Save the Date: March 5–7, 2004. "Healing from Oppression: Interpersonal, Identity-Based, and Political," San Francisco State University. A conference hosted by the UU Community Ministry Center, and cosponsored by The Unitarian

Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), Society for the Larger Ministry (SLM), and UUMA Community Minister focus group. Presenters include Dr. Selena Sermeño, Licensed Clinical Psychologist and human rights activist with expertise in all forms of oppression; Dr. Charlie Clements, President of the UUSC and longtime human rights activist; community ministers who provide healing ministries; and experts in various forms of oppression. Contact Margi McCue, President, UU Community Ministry Center at mccue@pdx.edu. •

A Call for Your Experiences: Healing Ministries

Reverends Mary Harrington and Charles Stephens are collaborating on a project called the Healing Ministries Project. The focus is “Healing and Care for Ministers, Lay Leaders, and Congregations Dealing with a Minister’s Serious Illness.” We are gathering and studying what happens and should happen in the congregation when one of our ministers suffers a serious illness or injury, receives a life threatening diagnosis, or finds themselves in the midst of a crisis, such as a family member’s illness, addiction, mental health issue, suicide, or death.

“I discovered I had cancer in 1999. I had surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. I was out of the pulpit for about six months, returning to my pulpit physically weakened and spiritually deepened. There were many things (concerning me, my family, and my congregation) that were done by the UUA, colleagues, and my congregation that were wonderful. There were things that could have been done better and things that were not even imagined,” says Charles.

We are asking that any of you who have experienced anything like this to share your own experiences: What happened? Include your feelings, reactions, perceptions, and/or

observations. What you learned. What help did you, your family, and your congregation receive? What help do you wish you had received? What hindered? What would you do, or have others do, differently? What helpful suggestions would you make to the UUA, the UUMA, or your district? What are any current issues or needs that you presently have?

We realize that one size does not fit everyone, especially UU’s. People need and want different things. We react and respond to illness in diverse ways. When a minister is seriously ill or in crisis, anyone involved may experience compassion, fear, anger, empathy, resentment, feelings of abandonment, or a calling to help, as well as many other feelings and reactions. We appreciate you sharing with us your examples, advice, warnings, suggestions, or current needs. Know that we will hold all that you tell us in the strictest confidence. If at some point we would like to include something you contributed in a presentation or in writing, we will contact you first and request your permission. If you, in your ministry, followed after a colleague who had been ill, or worked together with a colleague who was ill, your reflections about those experiences are also welcome.

For more information contact: Charles Stephens, Minister, UU Church at Washington Crossing, NJ, 609-737-0515, uurevchas@msn.com or Mary Harrington, Parish Minister, UU Church of Marblehead, MA, 781-631-1215, maryharrington@uuchurchmarblehead.com •

Skinner House Books

Skinner House Books, the imprint of the Unitarian Universalist Association, invites members of UU congregations to submit meditations for a forthcoming meditation anthology similar to the 2002 publication *How We Are Called*. Past meditation manuals have included traditional meditations, prayers, and reflections

on life and nature. Prose meditations should be between 200 and 650 words. Poetry meditations should be no longer than 54 lines each. Meditations can be serious or funny. They should be suitable for both private reflection and public worship.

Your submission should include a cover letter and five or fewer complete pieces of original work. In your cover letter, please provide information on how to contact you, identify your affiliation with Unitarian Universalism, and provide some context for the writing in your sample, such as the purpose for which the pieces were originally written and the themes that interest you. If your work has been published, please give details.

Send your submission to: Mary Benard, Publications Department, Unitarian Universalist Association, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108 or submit electronically to skinner_submissions@uua.org

Skinner House Books is accepting meditation submissions until November 15, 2004. Please note that all meditations accepted for publication will be edited and that authors are responsible for obtaining any necessary permission to use copyrighted material.

Thank you and I hope to hear from you. •

Best,
Mary Benard
Editor, Skinner House Books
skinner_info@uua.org

New Website for Lay Leaders Launched!

A new UUA website was launched at GA specifically for lay leaders. It’s called InterConnections Resources. It’s an expansion of the highly acclaimed newsletter that has been useful to lay leaders (and ministers!) since 1998.

InterConnections Resources includes four parts:

1. A “QuickStart” section for those new in their lay leadership roles.

Lay leaders are provided with the three most useful books, articles, and web links appropriate for their roles. QuickStart is searchable by role, function, and size of congregation.

2. **A “Leadership Events**

Calendar” listing workshops, conferences, and classes offered by districts, headquarters, seminaries, and others that are designed to help develop lay leaders. The calendar is searchable by topic, date, sponsor, or simply by keyword.

3. **An easy-to-use list of FAQs** (frequently asked questions—and answers) in key leadership areas.

4. **A link to the on-line version of InterConnections**, the highly acclaimed newsletter for lay leaders that has been distributed in hardcopy to congregational board members since 1995.

The URL is www.uua.org/programs/layleader. Or lay leaders can simply go to uua.org, and click on the InterConnections Resources link on the left sidebar. ●

Call for Entries: The Third Annual Beacon Press Sermon Award

Open to any Unitarian Universalist minister, lay leader, ministerial student, or layperson, the award will be granted to a sermon that reflects upon the text of any Beacon Press book currently in print and applies its lessons to a moral or spiritual challenge of today. Sermons must have been delivered before a Unitarian Universalist congregation between February 1, 2003 and February 1, 2004. Entries are due March 1, 2004. Full submission guidelines are available at www.beacon.org.

The award carries an honorarium of \$500 worth of Beacon Press books. The winner will be invited to present the sermon in a worship service at General Assembly 2004. The sermon will be published on the Beacon Press website.

For information on the Beacon Press books that might be appropriate for your sermon, consult our

new One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary Catalog for Unitarian Universalists. Call 617-742-2110, ext. 299 to request a free copy. ●

Want Social Action Help?

A Prison Pen Pal Program is an easy way for your congregation to begin. The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF), the UU church by mail and cyberspace, offers a Pen Pal Program that can serve as a model to other UU congregations looking to take their first steps in prison ministry work. Pen pal programs are an affordable and personal way to increase understanding between those who are incarcerated and the free world. The CLF's prison ministry dovetails with the Study Action Issue voted at this year's General Assembly: Criminal Justice and Prison Reform. For a free copy of CLF's Pen Pal Guidelines, please contact the CLF's Prison Ministry Coordinator, Rev. Kathy Reis, at 617-948-6167 or clf@uua.org. ●



The Religious Leader

NEWS FROM THE UUA MINISTRY & PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP STAFF GROUP

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