

In This Issue

Descriptions of the programs for October
 Joys and Concerns
 Birthday Celebrations
 Pride Festival
 October in Columbus UU History



Mailing address: P.O. Box 698
 Fortson, Ga. 31808
 Meeting address: 1442 Double Churches Road
 Columbus, Ga. 31904
 Phone: 706-660-1442
 E-Mail Address: uucolga@bellsouth.net
 Newsletter E-Mail: psltmm@knology.net
 Website: www.uucolumbusga.org

Sunday Program and Service Leader Schedule

4 October

9:00—Adult R. E.—Christian Sectarianism
 10:40—**Norm Horofker**: Association Sunday
 Service Leader—**Barry White** Opener—**Pat Hart**
 Closer—**Marge Hall & Carolyn Searcy** Greeters—**Ann Newland & Marge Hall**

11 October

9:00—Adult R. E.—Christian Sectarianism
 10:40—**Stephanie Da Silva**, Assistant Professor of Psychology at CSU will present a program entitled, “Some Classical Insights into Our Prejudices.”
 Service Leader—**Pat Hart** Opener—**Marge Hall & Carolyn Searcy**
 Closer—**Gerda Smith** Greeters—**Mark Berger & Connie Ussery**

18 October

9:00—Adult R. E.—TBA
 10:40—**Harvey Richman**, Professor of Psychology at CSU will be speaking on “What You Can and Cannot Expect.”
 Service Leader—**Mona Crawford** Opener—**Gerda Smith**
 Closer—**Julie Bouchard** Greeters—**Barry White & Nikki Rohrs**

25 October

9:00—Adult R. E.—TBA
 10:40—**Mona Crawford** will present a program entitled, “The Big #5: Sikhism.”
 Service Leader—**Paul Lee** Opener—**Julie Bouchard**
 Closer—**Janet & Norm Horofker** Greeters—**Nancy Awtrey & Tanya Davis**

Happy Birthday!



4 Oct.	Shirley Gray	16 October	Rick Spradlin
20 Oct.	Dick McMichael	20 October	Betty Lippitt
23 Oct.	Elizabeth Coss	24 October	Marge Hall

This Month in Columbus UU History

During the month of October in 2002 Sanjay Lal presented a program on Gandhi and Unitarianism, Marlyne Marrow led a service on the Death Penalty, Dr. Kelly Alley led a discussion on Hinduism, and Charles Clark presented a program—“Core Values, Rooted on a South Georgia Farm.”

An End of the Month social was held on 25 October, 2002.

Norm Horofker wrote in the October newsletter about his absence from the Fellowship due to working in Bangalore, India. He also wrote about the homecoming events he attended at Queen’s University for his graduating class.

Pride Celebration

You are invited to participate in the upcoming UU celebration at the Pride Festival in Piedmont Park, Atlanta the weekend of October 31 to November 1st. Whether you are interested in showing your smiling face as a volunteer at the Georgia UU booth, marching in the Pride parade, working the event to raise money for the 2010 UU Pride, or simply lending your support by attending. There's room for all! You can contact Tricia Page at wrknprogrez@yahoo.com or 404-374-6922 if you are interested in lending your support for any of the UU events planned in conjunction with the celebration. The Pride Festival is one of the annual events that focus on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

Joys and Concerns

Need to get something done, call Shaun, phone 706-561-5037.

UU is looking for a handyman to do some minor repairs. If you know of someone you feel comfortable recommending, give your contact information to Brenda, our office administrator.

Energy, Enthusiasm, & Risk Build Vital Congregations Drive Time Essay from Interconnections, written by Don Skinner

Some congregations just seem to know where they're going and how to get there. They have energy and enthusiasm, not only on Sunday mornings, but in their governing board meetings and in their small groups, and religious education programs.

What creates this feeling? What causes congregations that once struggled to rise above the status quo, to shine, to develop a "vision" of the ministry they want to provide in the world? Often that vision is inspired by a transformational experience—the start of a new ministry, making a conscious decision to grow, or holding a capital campaign, or sometimes just an inspirational speaker or workshop will spark a change.

Here are several congregations that have developed new visions of themselves.

The First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, Iowa is on an upswing. After three decades of static membership, it's gone from 250 to 350 in the past two and a half years. No one would have predicted this a few years ago, when the congregation was enduring a period of conflict. But that conflict was followed by several years of interim ministry, when the congregation took another look at itself and decided it wanted to be more than it had been—and to grow.

The Rev. Mark Stringer says, "Most of the congregation's growth has been a product of taking risks." Stringer acknowledges that he was one of the first risks, being called by Des Moines in 2001, right out of Meadville Lombard Theological School. The congregation stretched in other ways. "For a while now," said Stringer in the spring of 2005, "we've been about a half position ahead of ourselves in staffing. Just before I came, the congregation hired a full-time administrator. Last fall we hired a membership coordinator. Our director of religious education has gone from three-quarter to full-time."

Other changes that facilitated growth and enthusiasm: First Unitarian decided to move from aboard and committee structure to a council format, in which many decisions are made by working groups. Stringer encouraged the congregation to become more involved in the community.

Last fall the lay ministry team—the Care Crew—was revamped not only to serve shut-ins, but also to provide outreach to young parents, people needing chores done, and so on.

"Now," says Stringer, "we have two coordinators overseeing a bunch of working groups. If you've got the volunteers—and we do—it's a fabulous way to go. We have 50 people involved on our Care Crews." More changes: a new Small Group Ministry program, now in its fourth year, helps connect people. Members switch groups every six months, and group leaders have their own monthly group. "That's become a real leadership training ground," says Stringer. "People are willing to be leaders because they only have to serve six months. In that time they develop stronger links to me, and to the church, and they're willing to try another leadership role." Also a "leadership think tank" has replaced the Committee on Ministry. Stringer says, "I wanted more people to be involved and since the church's level of trust in me seems strong right now, I wanted to try this." About 25 people meet every couple of months to talk about what's happening in the church.

Interim ministry gets some of the credit for these changes. And Stringer takes a little credit himself. “My preaching style,” he says, “is very focused on the newcomer.”

The Rev. Sydney Wilde is co-minister of the UU Church in Reston, Virginia. Social justice has helped energize Reston. Wilde says, “Several people have taken on social causes and they’ve gotten others involved.” A vote to hang a banner supporting marriage equality further energized the congregation. When membership fell off several years ago, the Membership Committee, just four people, was boosted to 14. Says Wilde, “We spent time making sure people were welcomed and that brought our numbers back up.” Forty-two percent of the congregation is in 11 covenant groups. Wilde says, “People have a place to go where their story is known. Also, there’s a huge sense this is a safe community. It’s not a place where people get into big arguments.”

A lay ministry program is beginning at Reston. A capital campaign is underway. There’s been a surge in adult religious education. Wilde and Co-minister Dennis Daniel see themselves as facilitators—and cheerleaders. Says Wilde, “When we get leaders who are excited we do everything we can to support and encourage them.”

The First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has taken several steps in recent years to build enthusiasm and vitality. It added a second Sunday service and a second set of children’s religious education classes. A new family choir of children and adults sings monthly, and gathers for a weekly potluck before rehearsal. The Rev. David Herndon says, “It’s a new model of building community through music.”

The congregation also started a campus ministry program. A staff member, Devon Wood, coordinates that program 12 hours a week and additionally serves as Membership and Communications Coordinator, working especially with newcomers.

A small group ministry program begun in 2001 now has 15 groups with more forming. Some are families together in one group. The families gather for a potluck, then the adults have their meeting while children have supervised play.

The hiring of “a super choir director” is helping to nurture musical talents of members rather than relying on outsiders. As a result of all these changes, attendance and membership have increased. The 9:30 service has as many children as the 11:00. The budget is up. Herndon says, “We’ve countered the revolving door syndrome.”

Are there similarities among these congregations? Several are using small group ministry to deepen community. The addition of paid membership coordinators has been important for some. The addition of other staff, such as music directors and directors of religious education, or simply increasing their hours, can inspire a congregation. Focusing on something outside the congregation, such as social justice, also helps. And as Rev. Stringer at Des Moines reminds, “It’s all about taking risks.”