

Community Ministry: An Ancient Art with a New Name

by The Rev. Amy E. Brooks

When people learn I am a minister, their first question usually is "What church are you with?" They are often surprised when I tell them "I am not with a church. I am a community minister." What, you might ask, is a community minister? It is the name Unitarian Universalists have given to ordained ministers who decide to work in a setting other than the traditional church or fellowship*. We are chaplains, counselors, administrators and educators. We often work in hospitals, colleges or among the many not-for-profit organizations that serve our communities' underserved populations.

I can't speak for all community ministers, but from my perspective, and I suspect many others, healing is the central focus of our work. In my ministry with the Regional AIDS Interfaith Network (RAIN) in Charlotte, NC, I meet many people whose lives have been broken apart by illness, in body, mind, and spirit. At RAIN we seek to heal these wounds. We serve meals, and help people get to the doctor. We listen to stories of isolation, loneliness, and fear. We get into the trenches and wrestle with homeless, substance abuse, and racism. By our presence and love we provide a salve to sore souls.

Of course we can't do it alone. I spend much of my time in congregations of all kinds training and supporting volunteers whose faith calls them to serve. In the process, many of the volunteers are challenged to move across boundaries of homophobia, race, religion, and class. It is a healing of a different kind - from blindness to sight, from concern to action, from

fear to love. The issue may change from AIDS to homelessness, to battered women, but the transformation is the same. When we get involved in people's lives, we are changed and healed.

We only have a few community ministers in the T.J. District. Yet for me, community ministry is at the heart of our religious movement. Some denominations call this mission and outreach. Whatever we call it, my dream is that we will have many more. Does your congregation have a community minister?

**All community ministers must be endorsed by a local UU congregation.*

News from The Mountain:



Schedule Change for Leadership School 2000 Leadership School at The Mountain will be July 30-August 5. Tuition is \$550.00. Although 11 months away, please put these dates on your calendar, start your selection process as soon as possible, and make Leadership School a line item in your congregation's budget this and every year!

Religious Education Week at The Mountain will be July 9-15, 2000. The fee will be determined at a later date. Make RE Week a part of the annual budget this and every year too!

Qiyamah's Corner



July 5, 1999 marked my first day at the office and the now, *infamous fire* that resulted from a thunderstorm. We survived with a minimal amount of damage to our equipment, files and records. The same cannot be said of the building. Damages were estimated at \$58,000. We have obtained temporary office space at the Holy Covenant United Church of Christ. The space is perfect and will house us for 3-5 months or until renovations on the "white house" are completed. This is a perfect segue to encourage the fostering of interfaith relations. Not only does it promote communications and understanding between faith communities, but in our instance, encouraged the sharing of resources.

On the occasion of my new beginning as DE, I pledge my commitment and dedication to each of you in the UUA/ Thomas Jefferson District. Though the DE position encompasses a range of responsibilities my most important roles are to, "support and serve existing congregations, help facilitate the start up of new congregations, and extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalism and its principles in the Thomas Jefferson District." Not a small job by any means, but with your help and support we can continue to hold our own as the fastest growing district in the continental USA.

I know there is a lot of interest about who I am and my spiritual odyssey. I will be sharing this information at the Fall Leadership Conference and we hope to see a record turnout. The following updates provide some clues on what I have been up to:

Congregations- I have been in a whirlwind of activities to get out and talk with as many of you as possible. Saturdays and Sundays have been my busiest time, however in an effort to accommodate many more of you, I will be scheduling week-day visits for vespers, potlucks, breakfasts, brunch, lunches, suppers, and any

other creative face to face meetings. I have been reading your newsletters and some of us have been e-mailing back and forth. If you do not hear from me, please feel free to call me with your calendars in hand.

Leadership School - This was my first year on the Leadership School faculty. I am absolutely impressed with the ability of LS faculty and the curriculum. Participants engage in a powerful immersion experience at the magical locale of The Mountain in dynamics of congregational leadership. This year the TJ District had 34 participants out of a total of 51. Nine of the 12 faculty are affiliated with the TJD.

General Assembly- General Assembly in Salt Lake City was packed with a great number of workshops to accommodate the diverse interests of all the attendees. This year the Service of the Living Tradition honored 45 ministers in final fellowship and 13 ministers retiring. I attended workshops on fundraising, stewardship, financially healthy congregations, large congregation growing, and of course, all the plenary's I could pack in. Meeting all the field staff, including the DE's provided a wonderful opportunity for resource sharing.

TJ Board Retreat- Bill Sinkford and Tracey Robinson Harris, Director and Deputy Director from the Department on Congregational, District and Extension Services in Boston, facilitated the TJD Board start-up weekend retreat. Without giving anything away, let me say it was one of the most powerful and moving experiences in my life as a Unitarian Universalist. If you want to hear and see more, then join us at the Fall Leadership Conference in Hendersonville, NC where the TJD Board and I will exchange vows.

Ashe' and Blessed Be,
Qiyamah



WHERE ARE THE MEN?

Studies show that men attend Sunday services and participate in church activities, in significantly smaller numbers than women. Why is this the case? And what, if anything, can be done about it?

The Unitarian Universalist Men's Network (UUMeN) addresses these and other questions in its new booklet, "A Community of Men: A Guide to Men's Programming in Unitarian Universalist Congregations." The booklet includes many examples of successful programs for UU men, and offers a how-to for those interested in building strong, lasting men's groups. Contact UUMeN by phone at (800) 227-6670, or by e-mail at UUMeN@usa.net, or on the web at <http://www.uumen.uua.org>. Or, send \$5.00 for the booklet to: UUMeN, 4190 Front Street, San Diego, CA 92103.

TJ District Compensation Consultants Available Soon

Wendell Putney (Greensboro) and Martha Shore (Norfolk) have been appointed by the TJ Board to be compensation consultants for the TJ

(TJ District Compensationcontinued)

District. They will receive training at the UUA office in late October.

The question you may have is "What will they do?" May-be first it would be good to know what they won't do! They will not tell congregations what salaries they ought to pay local staff.

What they will do is facilitate discussion about salaries. They will provide lots of information about salaries both in the denomination and in relevant job markets. They will pose important questions that each congregation needs to answer. After those questions are grappled with, a congregation can build a compensation philosophy that it can be proud of and then implement.

The good news is that this is a free service from the UUA and the even better news is that dealing with those tough money issues makes a community stronger.

For more information please contact:

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Switcharoo

In a sequence of unplanned moves, Leon Spencer finished his term as UUA Trustee and was elected Vice President of the TJ District Board. Ed Wilde resigned as Vice President of the Board and was elected UUA Trustee. Even so, they are still easy



to tell apart.

President's Report

by Linda Lane-Hamilton

When a congregation gets a new minister, its members get acquainted and set goals during a start-up weekend. The TJ Board did the same with our new District Executive, Qiyamah Rahman, at our August retreat. At this retreat, led by Bill Sinkford and Tracey Robinson-Harris of the UUA, the board began reexamining how we function: how can we best provide service to the congregations in our district? How can we expand and coordinate leadership opportunities and consulting teams within our district? Are there better ways we can offer training, organize cluster and district meetings, and respond to conflict in our congregations? What can we do to refine and clarify our mission?

We have only begun asking these questions, good questions to ask in the third year of "Fulfilling the Promise," the focus of which is to examine how districts can better serve their member congregations. We will seek discussion and direction from the district over the next year to improve district services, but we also seek your support now for commitments we have already made.

The district made two major commitments last spring when we approved our long range plan: to hire a half-time Religious Education Program Consultant, and to continue the work of the district's Anti-Racism team. At our retreat, we reviewed the search process for the RE Consultant, a full-time position that will be shared with The Mountain, set deadlines, and selected a search committee. The search committee includes representatives from both The Mountain and TJ: Tom Warth, Jill Allison, Shelley Denham, Qiyamah Rahman, Rev. Dan King, and Kathleen Carpenter. By the summer of 2000, we will have an RE consultant.

To support these two initiatives and other district projects, the district will seek new ways to raise money. Rather than raise district dues, as we have done to support past long range plans and initiatives, we have instead committed to a major

fund-raising effort. In fact, several districts have "Friends of the District" programs to provide additional financial assistance for similar programs. Our fund-raising team will begin the campaign at the annual meeting this spring. You will recognize many of the names of folks on this committee: Paul Clipp, Mason Moseley, Cyndy Bailes, Ken Dorsett, Tom Turnipseed, Bob Gross, Doug Walters and Krissa Palmer.

With Qiyamah's arrival, then, we have the opportunity not only to continue the good works we have done but to continue making changes in how we can best serve our congregations.



whY aRe yoU yoU?

One thing youth like is other youth. another thing they like is doing things that make people feel good. this year, there will be plenty of opportunities for both in Thomas Jefferson. first, there will be a YRUU **Con in Raleigh** October 29-31st, called Candy Con. We will have two spirituality development conferences, one in November and the other in March. they will be lead by Dawn McDaniel and Meagan Carter, who attended the National Spark the Spirit Conference. The **Charlotte Con** will be February 4-6, 2000. also, next summer Con-Con and GA will both be in the south. These national events are spectacular ways to meet youth from all over. if you have any questions, contact:

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Coming Events:

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| October 8-10 | Fall Leadership Conference
Hendersonville, NC |
| October 22-24 | Young Adult Conference
UU Fellowship of Raleigh |
| November 12-14 | TN UU Con
Chattanooga, TN |
| January 14-16, 2000 | TJ Board meeting |
| April 28-30 | TJ Annual Meeting
Eno River, Durham, NC |
| June 22-26 | GA, Nashville, TN |
| July 23-29 | SUUSI |
| July 30-Aug 5 | Leadership School
The Mountain, Highlands,
NC |



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