



Monthly Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of St. Petersburg, FL

“AN APPRECIATION OF MY MINISTER'S WORK IN RE-SHAPING THE DRE”

Careena Cornette-MacCue

In 2010, a few short weeks after I was hired as St. Pete's DRE, I trundled down to Bradenton for my first Professional Development workshop. To put it bluntly: I was a wreck. Make that “a wreck-and-a-half,” one point five. And I remained somewhere around the “1.4999 Big Ol' Wrecks” level for my first couple of years as an R.E. teacher. I just didn't understand how to make it click together.

“Faith Development is all we do,” said Connie Goodbread, the southeastern USA's goddess of R.E. “Unitarian Universalism is all we teach.”

“Yes, but...!!” I kept saying to myself. “But what about the children's soccer defeats and custody disputes and curiosity about mainstream Christianity? What about their penpals, trading cards, and interest in Buddhism and Taoism? Let's focus on their daily lives first, and the Free Religion will build on it.” My view of the process was backward.

I was trying; I really was. I knew the seven Principles, and I read up on the history of the UUA merger. I knew that an R.E. program has to have a moderate amount of humor to drag the kids from their warm beds, and I also knew, from many years of teaching theater, that a classroom needs a delicate balance between disciplined order and creative chaos.

“Faith Development is All We Do,” said the goddess Connie. “Unitarian Universalism Is All We Teach.” I had been misunderstanding the words: she was not saying that Free Religion is the only thing we teach. Free Religion is ALL we do. It is within everything else, not to the exclusion of everything else.

“Minister Appreciation”, p.4

UUSP MISSION

“Our mission is to be an inclusive, evolving religious community
that inspires spiritual and intellectual growth
to make our world a better place.”

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ALARUMS & DIVERSIONS

Rev. Kathleen Korb

At the Florida Unitarian Universalist Ministers' retreat last month, one of the topics was spiritual growth and maturity, both for ourselves and for the members of our congregations. In the effort to expand our thinking processes, we were asked to express our understanding of this in some visual way. Luckily, this was not required, since – although I had a very clear visual image of what I wanted to say – I am seriously challenged in the plastic arts. What I did, therefore, was to write a poetic meditation; but whether it conveyed the message I wanted, I am not at all sure. For me, the path of spiritual growth leads outward from the rather self-absorbed aesthetic high that is usually thought of as a spiritual experience (and it really is, since all appreciation of beauty is intensely spiritual) to a life of humility and gratitude, where the gifts that you receive you recognize as true gifts for which you honor the giver. Whether my poem/meditation conveys that message is an open question, but here it is:

*He sits by the lake —
Old, homeless and alone;
Mostly alone, but now and then,
Somehow, anyhow, he has something to feed the birds.*

*They come: A couple of egrets, maybe a woodstork,
And gulls — flocks of gulls.*

*There is a door in the church with two arched windows looking out to the lake.
The gulls fly past, making patterns of beauty,
Flying toward the giving hand.*

*He is old and homeless,
Alone but for the birds and his loving heart.
The pattern of the birds gives me that stab of ecstasy for which I long.*

*What can I give him to repay what he gives me?
The birds give him joy.
I can only honor him.*

Katy



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UUSP VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is to be the beacon
for freedom of thought,
belief, and conscience
in St Petersburg.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greg Burton

The list of activities in last week's Order of Service was a delight to read. So much is now happening at the Church. From the return of Gilmour Gadflies and RE's presence on the shuffleboard courts, to the new music program with its once-a-month guest musicians, there is a genuine feeling of excitement. What is especially rewarding is how much of the enthusiasm is a direct result of the actions of individual members. The commitment of the congregation to the growth of the Church is very evident and is deeply appreciated by everyone involved with leadership.

My personal hope is that we can re-introduce a monthly lunch like we used to have. Those Sundays were a wonderful social event, and they also provided a needed venue where members could ask the Board questions.

I would like to take this opportunity to express the Board's deep appreciation of the work Fred Russell and Fred Becker have done on the heating and air conditioning project. We are now in the process of soliciting bids for the work. My understanding is that six different contractors came last week to obtain copies of the specifications and have a tour of the building. The Trustees of Endowment and the Board of Trustees are currently working together to explore financing options. Once the two boards have decided on a recommendation, we will have a congregational meeting. The congregation will have the final say on how we cover the cost.

5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN UNDERWAY

Marcia Piacentino

In September, the UU St Pete Board of Trustees authorized a task force to begin the task of planning for the church's future. The 12-person task force hit the ground running! By stepping back to visualize how we hope the church will be in the future, we have formulated a Vision statement for UU St Pete, refreshed the church's Mission statement (our "Reason for Being") and prioritized 6 strategic goal areas.

Vision:

Our vision is to be the beacon for freedom of thought, belief, and conscience in St Petersburg.

Mission:

Our mission is to be an inclusive, evolving religious community that inspires spiritual and intellectual growth to make our world a better place.

Major Strategic Goal Areas:

Membership

Facilities

Finance

Worship and Spiritual Growth

Governance and Leadership Development

"Branding" / Marketing

The Task Force agreed that for any plans to succeed in these or any other areas, we must develop a living covenant of behavior toward one another.

Your Help Needed!

For each of these strategic goal areas, we will be developing a 5-year plan that includes specific steps, timelines, and measurements. The plan(s) will be designed to align with our stated mission and move us toward our desired vision and will help guide decisions, church-wide, moving forward.

Any member with an interest in helping to shape the plans for UU St. Pete's future is invited to contact Marcia Piacentino via email at marcia.piacentino@uustpete.org.

Check It Out!

MONDAYS: Shaolin Kung-Fu, 7pm
N.A., 7pm

TUESDAYS: Handbells, 6pm

WEDNESDAYS: Mindfulness Meditation, 7pm

THURSDAYS: Shaolin Chi Kung, 6pm

FRIDAYS: Picnic on the Playground, 6:45pm

SUNDAYS: Choir Rehearsal, 9am

Discussion Group, 10am

Service, 11am

“Minister Appreciation” (cont'd. from p. 1)

I've heard a couple of comments that my All Ages stories have trended toward the “sedate” for the last several months; that I seem to have lost some of my puppeted, be-sequined, over the top ridiculousness. A temporary transition! It may seem that my stories have quieted, but that's because any great artist-- or, *ahem*, middling artist-- must, when going through a period of growth, “break down” his or her style before rebuilding it, stronger than before. I haven't been censored or restrained; I've done my remedial reading on what constitutes a UU Worship Service. The puppets, confetti, and special effects will rebuild, as I increase my understanding of how to better use comedy to shape (“-ship”) worth (“wor” – “worship”). We, the worship committee, have had to do a lot of remedial reading...and, again, break down the old style before rebuilding.

What I'd had was a good start. What I had needed was that which working closely with a full time, experienced, U.U. seminary-trained minister can provide: a solid focus on grounding the congregation and students in Free Religion. And while my admiration and affection for Rev. Alec Craig know no bounds, my ability to be taught by him was restricted by his geographic distance and quarter-time status. And then, miraculously, Reverend Katy appeared, and she started the months of uphill battle to change my (opinionated) mind about how a healthy U.U. children's program functions.

The students' curiosities, sidebars, hobbies, humoresques, and weekly emotional maturation still come first. Their development as human beings always comes first. But now, instead of being draped around an unsteady framework of balsa wood, posterboard, and glitter, it is firmly anchored to Free Religion. Faith development is within all we do. Unitarian Universalism is within all we teach.

I am not wanting to make unwarranted infomercial-style claims about my transformation as a DRE, but I must say: after the growing pains of accepting the wisdom of these vastly more experienced women, my professional development has grown by leaps and bounds. And yes, I'm still settling in to my new “Substance before Style” technique, but the Style will catch up soon. More important, though, is my gratitude for the ability to better guide our students' spiritual development.

In Faith,
Careena



“Arizona Is Our Town”
Special Service & Pot Luck
Sunday, 11/17, 11am

Farmworker Camp Visit
Plant City
Saturday, 11/23, all day

Stone Soup
Gilmour Hall
Sunday, 11/24, 10am

Thanksgiving Dinner
Pot-Luck Style
Gilmour Hall
Thursday, 11/28, 3pm

Greening of the Church
and Pot-Luck Supper
Church-wide
Friday, 12/6, 3pm

For more, check the UUSP
calendar, order of service,
Facebook, and Twitter!

GET INVOLVED!

There are LOTS of ways that you can pitch in, help out, and have FUN!
Talk to the chair of the committee that interests you, or just crash their next meeting!

Here are the major committees and ministries:

Building & Grounds | Program Council | Care Ministry | Scope
Social Justice (*Homeless Sub-ministry / Migrant Sub-ministry*) | Children's Religious Education
UU Service Committee | Growth Committee | Worship Committee
Congregational Life / Membership | Hospitality | Strategic Planning

VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED, WELCOMED, AND APPRECIATED!

SPLINTERS FROM THE BOARD: A REPORT FROM THE NOVEMBER MEETING

Tamara Lush

Board members present: President Greg Burton, Marcia Piacentino, Ian O'Hara, Lori Price, and Dani Skrzypek. Also present: Rev. Katy Korb, Board Clerk Keevy McAlavy, Office Manager Nick Wheeler, A/C project supervisor Fred Becker, Endowment Board Chair Darren Stowe, and Splinters reporter Tamara Lush.

Notes:

- Katy opened the meeting with some good news: A parishioner sent a \$2,000 donation and a letter praising the church's good works.

- Katy recounted a recent meeting with the next door neighbor and a representative from the office of the Mayor of St. Petersburg. The neighbor at the 735 building has complained about homeless activity on Friday nights, when the church provides dinner. Katy said that everyone came to an "amicable compromise."

- Katy announced that she has been asked to perform a prayer service in the coming weeks for a memorial service for the homeless. Also, on Saturday, Nov. 3, Katy will staff an interfaith table at a folk fair in St. Petersburg.

- Greg gave the treasurer's report. After reviewing the church's finances, he said that UUSP needs to be "extremely cautious" about expenses.

- Much of the discussion during the hour-and-a-half-long meeting was devoted to the replacement of the air conditioning system. Greg began the discussion by acknowledging all of the hard work that Fred Becker has done on the project, and Fred gave a brief recap of the issue. "It's a complex project," Becker said.

The board went into the project thinking it would cost about \$300,000; as of now, the cost of the project is expected to be about \$227,000, but Fred said that there are other costs on top of that, including a project architect and an engineering study.

The board unanimously approved two contracts involving the air conditioning system. One was for Fred Russell's architectural services; the other was for the hiring of the onsite supervisor.

Greg said that the Board of Trustees will hold a joint meeting with the Endowment Board regarding payment for the air conditioner replacement. A special congregational meeting will be held in early December to vote on the issue.

- Office Manager Nick said he was able to buy a computer that will be dedicated for church office work and located at the church. The Board approved of this.

- Marcia gave a report from the Strategic Planning Committee task force. The group has met twice. Marcia said the group is coming up with a new mission statement, a five year plan, and has determined that there are six major strategic goal areas.

- Katy said she is working on an intergenerational service for the Sunday before Christmas and on the annual Christmas Eve candlelight service.

PLEASE NOTE: Splinters is written by Tamara Lush. Splinters is meant to be about what happened at a board meeting. It is not official and it is not minutes.

GUEST AT YOUR TABLE

Our Annual giving campaign, Guest At Your Table, will begin with the Sunday Service on November 24th. It is our custom to distribute Guest at Your Table boxes or envelopes for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee before Thanksgiving and collect them the first Sunday after the New year. You are asked to place the box on your table at mealtimes and welcome your unseen guest by putting money into the box at each meal. In our Religious Education classes each child takes a box home to sit on the family holiday table throughout the season. When family and friends gather to enjoy their blessings, they can reflect on the contribution of their "guest" in "Stories of Hope" to the movement for universal human rights---and to share generously.

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*The good life is one inspired by love
and guided by knowledge.*

-Bertrand Russell

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