



# JPD Newsletter

Connecting all Unitarian Universalists in the Joseph Priestley District:  
Southern New Jersey, Delaware, Eastern and Central Pennsylvania, Maryland,

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District of Columbia, Northern Virginia

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## Dear JPD Churches and Fellowships:

This will be my last issue as editor of the JPD Newsletter. It has been a privilege to have served JPD and all of you for nearly seven years. A long time, and now time for me to step aside and for new ideas and approaches to be used in communicating with all of you.

Rev. Dr. Richard Speck will be informing you about the new software and new ideas for communication in the future.

I shall miss very much the monthly newsletters from this JPD community. Reading them, I am proud and impressed by what our congregations accomplish.

With space limitations, one has to make hard choices. I regret many ongoing programs that never received mention. They may seem small in "newsworthiness", but not so in their impact on the communities they aid. I think of the thousands of casseroles prepared and delivered to centers for the homeless, disadvantaged, and elderly; the thousands of pounds of foods collected for food banks and pantries; the thousands of packages of toiletries, books, clothing, school supplies provided to those in need; the contributions raised for partner churches and local social service organizations; and the untold volunteer hours that have gone toward these efforts. This list barely scratches the surface of what our churches and fellowships accomplish month after month, year after year.

I am proud to be a UU and a part of these efforts to sustain and grow our community and to make our world better and more just.

Bette Austin, Editor

## Fairfax UU Begins Initiative to End Homelessness

UU Congregation of Fairfax, Oakton, VA has begun an initiative to help end homelessness in Fairfax County.

Working with FACETS, a local, non-profit agency, Fairfax UU will provide temporary, supportive housing to a homeless family for two years and contribute to supportive

housing for two homeless individuals. This type of housing provides a stable environment, enabling homeless people to improve their life situation.

## Silver Spring Receives Environmental Award

UU Church of Silver Spring, MD was one of two congregations to receive a first Light Award from the Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light for its work on global warming and environmental stewardship.

The award stated that the Silver Spring church has been "an incredible leader at the congregational level (in pursuing) sustainability to protect creation from threats like climate change."

## First Church in Philadelphia Proposes "Declaration for Life"

The Social Justice Ministry team of First Unitarian Church, Philadelphia, PA proposed the personal signing of a "Declaration of Life," designating legal systems and one's loved ones NOT to seek the death penalty if one is murdered.

This action grew out of a sermon by its pastor, Rev. Nathan C. Walker, urging the need to seek reconciliation and not retribution.

## Cedar Lane Joins "Cool Capital Challenge"

Seventy-three families of Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda, MD joined the "Cool Capital Challenge," a group of residents, communities, businesses, congregations, and government agencies committed to reducing the capital region's annual carbon dioxide emission by one billion pounds by Earth Day, April 2008.

## Trips to Partner Churches planned for 2008

In celebration of its tenth year of partnership with a church in Romania, members of Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church, Alexandria, VA are planning an intergenerational trip July 21-August 3. Along with visiting the partner church, they also will visit sites of historical and Unitarian significance.

Members of Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA, also plan a pilgrimage to its partner church in Transylvania July 3-17. Among the trip's highlights will be visits to the Unitarian high school supported by MLUC, a service in the historic Varfalva partner church and the church in Torda, where the Edict of Torda was proclaimed, providing religious tolerance for the first time as an official policy of a kingdom.

In other partnership news, the Social Justice Committee, UU Congregation of Wyoming Valley, Wilkes-Barre, PA plans to join with two members associated with UU Fairfax Congregation, Oakton, VA, who are organizing to build a small orphanage in India's Khasi Hills in northeast India.

The Romanian partner church of River Road UU Congregation, Bethesda, MD has begun a special education program for disadvantaged children, to deal with behavior problems, underachievement and the integration of the children of Gypsies, against whom there are strong prejudices.

### **Labyrinth Proposed for York Congregation**

UU Congregation of York, PA is considering a proposal to construct a labyrinth on its church grounds.

A modified version of the eleven-circuit labyrinth of France's Chartres Cathedral, a chalice will be at the center of the 52-foot labyrinth and the seven UU principles will be reflected in seven circuits. It also will reflect four phases of life: childhood, youth, adulthood and elder, and, through its slightly asymmetrical design, reflect UU's acceptance of diverse people and viewpoints.

### **UU Congregation of Columbia Antiracism Series**

The Columbia UU Congregation will hold a series of discussions using "Race—The Power of an Illusion" video series to discuss racism and how it affects modern society. It is sponsored by the UUCC's Journey Toward Wholeness Team. The series runs for the first three Wednesdays in January.

### **UU Legislative Ministry to form in NJ**

A state wide gathering to form the legislative ministry network will be held January 12, 8:45-3:30 at UU Congregation of Princeton, NJ.

### **Children Choose Cats and Dogs for Social Justice Project**

Kindergartners through fifth graders in RE classes at UU Fellowship of Centre County, State College, PA decided to make their own choices for their social action project this year.

Ideas ranged from supporting same sex marriage to saving the rain forest. A close vote, they chose to help animals and came up with 20 ideas for activities.

They have already built bird-feeders for non-migrating birds in winter. In future months, they will raise funds for Centre County PAWS, making and collecting items for the cats and dogs at the shelter, and supporting animals in rain forests.

**What's Happening...**Members of **UU Congregation of Fairfax, Oakton, VA**, head to New Orleans this January to rebuild homes destroyed by Hurricane Katrina two years ago. They are a part of groups organized by the UU Service Committee...**UU Church of Lancaster, PA** now recites the affirmation of faith in Spanish during services...UUA President Rev. William Sinkford, other UU clergy and United Church of Christ clergy delivered to Congressional leaders a petition for peace, signed by a combined total of 73,000 names, of which 13,000 were from UU churches.

**What We Care About...****Main Line UU Church, Devon, PA** sent 15 boxes of books to U.S. troops in Iraq...In the past seven years, members of **UU Congregation Columbia, MD** donated 1,068 units of blood in ongoing drives. Twenty-four others added their names to the National Marrow Donor Program.

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