



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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To Build a Church, to Expand, to Renovate — Yields Frustration — and Finding Patience

FOREVER. It's not really forever, it just seems that way to churches and fellowships wending their way through bureaucratic mazes to secure permits, licenses, mortgages, loans, engineering and architectural bids, and environmental approvals as they follow their dreams to realize a larger, better, more beautiful place in which to celebrate their UU faith.

A number of JPD churches and fellowships have embarked on this process. Here are parts of their stories.

A year ago, UU Congregation of the South Jersey Shore, Oceanville, NJ looked forward to breaking ground in 2006 for their new church for which they had purchased land.

As its president wrote, they did break ground, but it was to install a drift net to catch pine snakes for the Pinelands Commission. This was part of a habitat assessment to check for endangered species, that, along with the northern pine snake, included barred owls, Coopers hawks, and red-headed woodpeckers. Members and friends with professional expertise helped on these projects, but the UU Congregation of the South Jersey Shore awaits for pine snakes to appear or not appear and ground-breaking to proceed this spring.

After many months of negotiations with permit officials, River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD in April, 2005 finally received its building permit for its "bridge to the future" addition and renovations to an older building.

Along the way, there were many delays: a required letter of credit was lost then found; a lawyer handling the closing had to be replaced; a two-month standstill occurred last summer related to utility lines, but there is light at the end of the tunnel: the building-renovation project, providing 30 percent more space, is expected to be completed by summer 2007.

In 1995, UU Congregation of Fairfax, Oakton, VA undertook plans for an ambitious, three-phase building program. Phase 1, completed in fall 2002, provided an updated administration building. In September 2005, Phase 2 yielded the "Program Building." This was renovation of old Buildings 2 and 3, with a new building
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UUs Sponsor Roe v. Wade Service, Reproductive Rights Forum

While the U.S. Supreme Court debated Roe v. Wade issues, UUs of the Cumberland Valley, Boiling Springs, PA held a January interfaith service with the theme

"Remember, Reflect, Renew, and Rededicate."

Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church, Alexandria, VA also held a January lunchtime Reproductive Rights forum.

This service was organized by a member and seminary student of the Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, PA and that church's Reproductive Rights Task Force. The offering benefited Planned Parenthood of the Susquehanna Valley Fund for Choice.

UU House Celebrates 75th Anniversary

UU House in Philadelphia, PA's Germantown neighborhood will celebrate this year 75 years of providing quality retirement services for the elderly.

Originally an 1867 Victorian family house, it was bought in 1932 by members of the Unitarian Society of Germantown to provide a home for the elderly and was named the Joseph Priestley House.

In the early 1960's, Benjamin Rush House was built and later expanded in the mid-70's for residents requiring intermediate and skilled nursing care.

Now incorporating both houses, UU house merged in 1998 with Lycoming House, a retirement home that operated from 1943-1989. The merger included a substantial endowment that UU House has used to create a neighborhood Outreach program for the elderly. UU House has won local and international recognition as a model for retirement living.

Centre County Fellowship Launches Microcredit Project for Developing Countries

UU Fellowship of Centre County, State College, PA gave its non-pledge plate collection in January to its Social Action Committee that has invested in the Oikocredit Fund, providing loans primarily to women in developing countries, to help them start small businesses to improve their family's lives or educate their children.

Women typically buy sewing machines to make clothing for sale or a flock of chickens to sell eggs.

Oikocredit is incorporated in the Netherlands by the World Council of Churches and managed by the Netherlands Council of Churches.

The plate collection money was added to funds raised through sandwich sales and other activities by the Social Action Committee. The money earns a small amount of interest, and is used over and over for these unsecured loans. The persons who receive the loans have a good record of repaying them.

Building (continued)

connecting the two, and creating a chapel, social hall, new classrooms and teen center.

A third and final phase looks to expand and improve the Sanctuary, offering more fellowship space, an updated kitchen, a nursery, choir rehearsal room, and other amenities. As of late last year, more than \$1 million was raised toward the \$2 million goal to complete Phase 3. Reports are that the Program Building has enabled Fairfax to expand its activities and services in all directions.

After dreaming, planning and work, UU Fellowship at Easton, MD reports that in six months the congregation will be able to move into its newly-refurbished building. Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church, Alexandria, VA moves ahead with plans to remodel the Meeting House.

Other building projects underway or in the planning stage: First Unitarian Church, Wilmington, DE is moving ahead with an extensive building program; UU Church of Berks County, Reading, PA is considering a church center, integrating its Chalice House and existing church; UU Fellowship of Southern Maryland, Leonardtown, MD is taking first steps toward acquisition of land and a building; UU Fellowship of Lower Bucks, Langhorne, PA has established an initial Building Task Force to explore having its own building; UU Congregation of Wyoming Valley, Wilkes-Barre, PA ponders new space for a growing congregation and burgeoning RE classes, as does Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, PA, now holding two Sunday services and another on Saturday evening. Last spring, UU Congregation of the Susquehanna Valley, Northumberland, PA sold its Commons building and Chapel, and will look for interim space until decisions on buying or building a long-term facility are made.

Sounds of building and sawdust are in the air, but also plans and dreams, as UU congregations grow.

Honoring the Past, Creating 21st Century Lights of Hope

In 1831, First Church of Baltimore, MD acquired gas lanterns flanking the front steps of the sanctuary, an idea promoted by Rembrandt Peale, owner of the Baltimore gasworks and frequent visitor to the church and who wanted to promote gas lighting in the city.

It is now the 21st century and the lights, made by local ironsmiths, are badly deteriorated. The church has embarked on a project to repair and restore the lights with electricity—"honor the past and build toward a shining future."

Heads Up, JPD Artists!

UUs of Southern Delaware, Lewes, DE invite JPD artists to become vendors and non-artists and interested viewers to support UUSD's Arts and Handicrafts show on June 2, 2007. Artisans from the church and Delmarva area will participate.

Deadline for vendor application: April 27, 2007.

Contact Amy or Barbara: UUSDartshow@comcast.net

What's Happening....UU Church of Berks County, Reading, PA will celebrate its 175th

anniversary April 22 with a special service and coffee hour. It also voted to become a Welcoming Congregation in December...**UU Church of Hagerstown, MD** celebrates its 50th anniversary this year...Sanctuary Singers of the **UU Church of Silver Spring, MD** joined with the choirs of **Davies Memorial UU Church, Camp Springs, MD** and **Paint Branch UU Church, Adelphi, MD** for a February concert, honoring their musical volunteers and outreaching to one another. The concert benefited music programs of the three churches and raised funds for future commissions for composers, hiring local instrumentalists and chamber orchestras.

What We Care About....An Afghan evening of dinner, crafts, speaker and discussion at **Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda, MD** raised \$4,800 to fund a literacy class for one semester in Kabul...Other churches helping in providing shelter or meals to the homeless during the winter months were: **UU Congregation of Fairfax, Oakton, VA; First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, PA; and UU Church of Lancaster, PA...**Members of Social Action Coalition of **UU Fellowship of Easton, MD** took part in a winterization project with a neighborhood center and Easton Utilities...A total of 147 UUs from the **UU Church in Cherry Hill, NJ** took part in the congregation's first annual Community Outreach Weekend over two weekends collecting \$1,200 for CROP-Church World Services, American Cancer Society, Alzheimer Association, a Food Bank, an animal shelter, a Habitat and nature center, and others.

Joseph Priestley District Intergenerational Spring Conference

April 27-29, Hilton Harrisburg, PA

Theme: "Spreading the Faith"

Workshops, Friday, Saturday, Sunday

High School Youth will host and plan a Friday night worship service.

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