



# JPD Newsletter

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

November-December, 2007

District of Columbia, Northern Virginia Vol. 13 No. 2

## UU Churches in PA and NJ Undertake Legislative Advocacy Programs

UUs united in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey to set up state-wide action networks to undertake lobbying on issues important to Unitarian Universalists.

Called UUPLAN, an organizational meeting to elect a board and decide on first issues was held in Harrisburg, PA, September 29. Initial issues in PA were gun control, global warming, gay marriage and immigrant rights. Website is [www.uuplan.org](http://www.uuplan.org).

In NJ, a Steering Committee of the UU Legislative Ministry (UULMNJ) has contacted all NJ congregations for their input, with many congregations scheduling a PowerPoint orientation program and discussion during the fall months. An October meeting was held in Princeton, with leaders representing each congregation, to plan an organizing conference January 12. UU Congregation in Princeton is spearheading this effort.

The initial plan is for NJ congregations to take part by identifying three issues of primary focus through discussion, surveys and voting.

Overall goals are to protect the environment and demand ethical practice and personal integrity by government leaders. These efforts will complement and expand social justice activities and services within communities. A website, [www.uulmnj.org](http://www.uulmnj.org) is being developed.

Other states that have built UU legislative networks, providing an alternative voice to the religious right, in State capitols are New York, Maryland and California. These mature networks have full- or part-time lobbyists.

## Northern Virginia UUs United for Liberal Religious Revival

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, VA was host to a Liberal Religious Revival for Northern Virginia UU churches and fellowships September 29.

The day-long event included a variety of workshops on such topics as, Joining Forces for Social Justice in Northern VA; Building a larger UU community with outreach; Using the Power of the Web in Telling our UU Story; Liberal Religious Family Values.

The revival was initiated to give voice to supporting solutions "to the moral issues, such as poverty,

justice and environmental issues," and in the belief that, long overshadowed by Christian right, Religious Liberals are gaining new visibility and are today "engaged in the most intensive bout of political organizing and alliance building since the civil rights and the anti-war movements of the 1960s."

## Davies Memorial and Silver Spring Initiate Pioneering Exchange Program

Davies Memorial UU Church, Camp Springs, MD and UU Church of Silver Spring, MD are meeting for two Saturday meetings to share their experiences in becoming a Welcoming Congregation and a multi-racial, multicultural congregation.

Silver Spring, as a Welcoming Congregation with experience with a greatly increased gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender membership and church leadership, was host to the Davies congregation in late October. Davies will be host to Silver Spring in early November with the theme of "Becoming a Multi-racial Multicultural Congregation."

During the two sessions the two congregations expect to share stories, ask questions, hear answers and learn from each others' experiences.

## Columbia Congregation's Cradlerock Children's Center Rocks as Third Year Begins

Two years ago, UU Congregation of Columbia, MD launched its Cradlerock Children's Center to provide quality daycare and preschool services to children with few advantages.

Now, heading into a third year, these are some of Cradlerock's achievements:

Cradlerock operates 11 hours daily, five days weekly, 51 weeks of the year.

Children represent diverse backgrounds, cultures, socioeconomic levels.

Thirty percent of children received scholarships, amounting to \$60,000 yearly.

There are 17 full- and part-time employees, whose salaries make up 75 percent of expenses.

Payment on its \$190,000 debt, half of which went for renovation, may begin by Fall of 2008.

The congregation raised \$10,042 enabling the center to open a nursery. Cradlerock rocks, indeed.

## Study Underway for Baltimore First Church Becoming a "Peace Church"

The Board of First Unitarian Church of Baltimore, MD recently authorized the formation of a committee to study becoming a Peace Church. Initial definitions included these ideas:

A Peace Church seeks to solve all problems by nonviolent means and rejects violence against persons, especially that sponsored by government. The commitment to peace will be communicated by all possible means and will provide peace-making activities for members and encourage participation in peace activities provided by other organizations.

A peace church also will educate members on teachings of the world's great nonviolent leaders; current opportunities to resolve conflicts by nonviolence; and recent examples of nonviolent conflict resolutions.

## Dedication and Ground-Breaking for New UU Churches in Maryland and New Jersey

UU Fellowship at Easton, MD dedicated its new church in October, with Gini Courter, moderator for UUA General Assemblies, as guest speaker.

After nearly a year-long pine-snake survey that delayed progress, UU Church of the South Jersey Shore, Oceanville, NJ, will break ground for its new church November 18. The congregation also voted to extend for two years its first capital campaign, with a goal of \$200,000 for the new building.

## Partner Churches in India Receive Support from JPD Congregations

The Social Justice Committee of Accotink UU Church, Burke, VA, voted to support a UU School in Mawkria, in northeast India. To sponsor one student requires a donation of \$35. The school has 23 students. This amount will cover an entire year and provide books, some repairs to the school, a small subsidy to a low-paid teacher and some small expenses.

The Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, Alexandria, VA has a partner relationship with an Indian village in Mawlat, near Mawkria.

UU Congregation of Wyoming Valley, Wilkes-Barre, PA that has already underwritten a pig farm, soon to be self-sustaining, has also agreed to contribute to the building of an orphanage in this same Khasi Hills area.

The cost is \$600 per child that would cover all expenses, including a living wage to surrogate "moms," clothing and school fees.

UU Congregation of Fairfax, VA is well into its second year of aiding a student sponsorship program for the Unitarian School of Puriang, also in this part of India.

## News About Our Ministers

Rev. Daniel G. Higgins, Jr., is serving as Minister Emeritus and part-time Interim Minister at the *UU Fellowship at Easton, MD.* ... Rev. Libby Smith, who is also part-time Chaplain at Unitarian Universalist

House, an assisted living facility in Philadelphia's Germantown area, also has begun serving as part-time minister for *UU Fellowship of Lower Bucks, Langhorne, PA.*...Rev. Doddie Stone is the first and new contracted minister for the *UU Congregation of the South Jersey Shore, Oceanville, NJ.*... Rev. Russ Savage has joined staff of *River Road UU Congregation, Bethesda, MD* as Minister of Congregational Life...*UU Church of Hagerstown, MD* honored its minister Rev. Valerie T. Wills for her decade of service.

**What's Happening...** The *UU Fellowship of Pottstown, PA* will hold a 40th anniversary dinner, November 10...*UU Fellowship of Easton, MD* dedicated its new building in October...*Unitarian Society of Germantown (Philadelphia, PA)* made social justice its congregational priority for this year. ...Male members of *First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, PA* joined Rev. Nathan Walker for Philadelphia's "10,000 Men" campaign and march to reduce gun violence. ...The grocery store gift-card fundraiser program of the *Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, PA* sold slightly more than \$1 million worth of gift cards from January 2004 through September 2007. Through this program UCH is currently earning more than \$3,000 each month. Other UUs take note!

**What We Care About...***UU Church of Berks County, Reading, PA* gathered 500 signatures for the National Religious Campaign Against Torture: "Torture Is a Moral Issue." .... *Unitarian Society of Germantown, Philadelphia, PA* gave new meaning to American Independence Day last summer when it was host to 29 members of the International Tibet Independence Movement, protesting China's occupation of their nation since 1959. The group marched five miles to Independence Plaza, July 4. USG was the only one, among many churches contacted, to open its doors to ITIM.

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