

Newsletter - October, 2009

Massachusetts Bay District of Unitarian Universalist Congregations



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"Spreading the Good News through New Media and Social Networking"

Dancing About Architecture



by **Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley**
District Executive

"Writing about music is like dancing about architecture" is a line variously attributed to Miles Davis, Martin Mull and Elvis Costello. Whoever said it, it provides a great metaphor for how I want to describe for you the changes in the way the Mass Bay District and the UUA are structured (the architecture) and how that has impact on your religious life (the music).

The exciting news is that we have the potential of deepening and broadening our Unitarian Universalist faith in New England. Bear with me as I step you through how we've come to this place and maybe by the end you can join with me in the waltz!

With the election of each new UUA President, we engage in some introspection about how what we do as a denomination serves what you do in our congregations. The recent election of Peter Morales made clear that Unitarian Universalists desire growth for our future, relevance to our increasingly diverse culture, and opportunities to give witness to our values.

So we have begun to restructure our work to help us fulfill this mandate. Peter has promoted Harlan Limpert to Vice President and given him oversight of the program staff groups of the Association. These include Ministry and Professional Leadership, Lifespan Faith Development, Identity Based Ministries, Advocacy and Witness, and Congregational Life. Peter's intention is to improve collaboration across staff groups so as to better focus and coordinate initiatives. Kay Montgomery remains as Executive Vice President and, along with Treasurer Tim Brennan, continues to oversee the administrative and operational functions of the

Association.

Since Harlan had been the head of District Services (my boss!) that means that Districts have had to do some restructuring as well. Over time, our Districts have organized themselves into 5 regions. MBD has been in close relationship with the other New England Districts (Clara Barton, Ballou Channing and Northern New England) which creates a region that includes Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine.

I have been named the "Regional Lead" of this region. While I will continue my duties as District Executive of the Mass Bay District, this additional position means I will be the primary "communication hub" between these districts and the UUA, and I will be helping us all reimagine a new regional identity for Unitarian Universalism.

This new emphasis on a regional strategy opens up all kinds of new possibilities for us. The purpose of the District, as I understand it, is to help support, inspire and strengthen in you the kind of transformational leadership that will result in providing healthy, spiritually nurturing homes for liberal religious souls in the greater Boston area. We have three full time staff and two part time staff to help us provide programming and consultation for the full array of needs of 55 congregations.

Here's a brainstorming notion: what if we had 15 - 20 staff people available for over 225 congregations in New England? We could still provide general support for common purposes, and we could also have specialists who could concentrate on youth ministry, young adult ministry, social justice ministries, the particular needs of small congregations and of larger congregations, lifespan faith development for all ages, media and technology training... the list goes on. Sharing resources among all these districts could greatly enhance our ability to serve the congregations in each of our districts, as well as help create a greater sense of shared identity as Unitarian Universalists all seeking a common mission.

Each of our District structures serves an important purpose in understanding the unique cultural dimensions of our specific areas, but the boundaries between staff structures force all of us to be generalists. Is there a way in which we can rethink these structures so that we can be agile and relevant in responding to the changing needs of our communities?

Do these questions open up your imagination? Can you see ways in which the UUA and the Districts could better serve your congregations? Are there ways in which our congregations can better serve people hungry for our faith?

Please offer me your thoughts and ideas about these or other issues of concern to you. We are excited to begin this conversation as we learn to dance to new music!

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Resources on Restructuring

- [Map of UUA Districts](#)
- Learn about each of the New England Districts at their websites:
 - [Ballou Channing District](#)
 - [Clara Barton District](#)
 - [Massachusetts Bay District](#)
 - [Northern New England District](#)
- The [UU Growth Blog](#) by Peter Bowden
- "UUA Staff Restructuring Adds New V.P. Position" by Jane Greer [\[article\]](#)

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Social Networking for Social Justice: a training

November 14, 2009 from 9:30 AM to 1:00 PM

[First Parish in Framingham](#)

Cosponsored by [UU Service Committee](#) and [UU Mass Action](#)

Curious about Facebook? Want to Twitter? Ready for YouTube? Network with other Social Justice Committee members as you learn about NEW MEDIA TOOLS that can help you spread the social-justice message and inspire your congregation. Join the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee for a training to learn about these tools. RSVP to Nancy Banks at nancy.banks1@verizon.net or 617.835.5426.

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Transforming Our Whiteness

a workshop for white members of Unitarian Universalist congregations hosted by [Allies for Racial Equity](#)

December 5, 2009 from 8:30 AM to 10:00 PM

[First Parish Church, Arlington, MA](#)

[Funding provided by First Church in Boston, First Parish in Bedford, and the Massachusetts Bay District.]



In our society, white ways of living are the norm, making it difficult for white people to see the undue privilege of whiteness. In Transforming Our Whiteness we will explore:

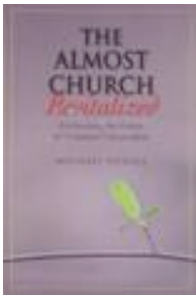
- white privilege and how it affects us
- the racial identity of white people
- the stories we are told and internalize about race and whiteness

In small groups, we will examine how racism impacts our congregations and use the Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist, Multicultural Institution to discuss strategies for making change.

For further details about content, facilitators, schedule and location [click here](#).

[REGISTER ONLINE](#)

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FREE

If your congregation has not already picked up a copy of Michael Durall's book *The Almost Church Revitalized: Envision the Future of Unitarian Universalism* at an MBD event, please email or call Judy Murray, District Administrator at mbd@mbduua.org or 617-493-4216 to request copies for leaders in your congregation.

"This book calls ministers and congregations to the true work of religion. Mike Durall gently, though persistently, points out the places where churches get stuck, go astray, and avoid their true calling. In doing so, he calls us to our best selves. His refreshingly pragmatic approach points us toward a revitalized faith." (Rev. Howard Dana, Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, PA)

Limit: 2 per congregation

[Meck Groot](#), Editor
[Massachusetts Bay District of UU Congregations](#)

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