

Unitarian Universalist Historical Society

October 2009 Newsletter

New Partnership Born

Four Unitarian Universalist groups whose missions, interests, assets, and needs intersect and sometimes overlap have agreed to work more closely together. Partners in Unitarian Universalist History and Heritage is the umbrella organization formed to facilitate this collaboration.

The Unitarian Universalist Historical Society is, of course, one of the four. The Unitarian Universalist Religious Education History Group, the Unitarian Universalist Women's Heritage Society, and the Universalist Heritage Foundation are the other Partners.

Under the partnership, each group will maintain its own distinct identity, mission, and method of organization. Members and supporters of the respective organizations will retain their primary connection with their group, and group newsletters, websites, and other activities will remain independently run.

Links and shared activities among the groups will increase, however, and the Partners will work together in efforts such as disseminating information to the larger Unitarian Universalist movement, providing support for research and preservation, organizing special events, and carrying out activities such as sharing a common table at General Assembly and other gatherings of Unitarian Universalists.

You may already have seen our shared space in the 2009 General Assembly display area. See the History Convocation article in this newsletter for an exciting future collaboration.

Journal of Unitarian Universalist History: Successful Search for New Editor

Dean Grodzins, after ten years of work which transformed and improved the Journal published by the UUHS, announced to the Board last January that he really needed to move on after getting out one more issue. Dean also strongly recommended that some compensation be found for this position, given the amount of work involved.

We sought and received a grant from the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program that enables us to begin offering a stipend for this work. The Search Committee of Dan McKanan, Gordon Gibson, and Cynthia Grant Tucker sought applicants and evaluated six excellent possibilities.

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Kathleen Parker, author of [Sacred Service in Civic Space: Three Hundred Years of Community Ministry in Unitarian Universalism](#) (Meadville Lombard Press, 2007) and other studies, has accepted our invitation to begin understudying Dean Grodzins and will take over from him as editor after the forthcoming issue. We also thank the five other outstanding applicants for their willingness to be considered for this position.

Margaret Fuller Bicentennial - 1810-2010

Your Historical Society has been working with two groups which will be providing an array of programs to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Margaret Fuller's birth. Fuller was, of course, an integral part of the Transcendentalist circle, a pioneering feminist, a brilliant writer, and a pathbreaking journalist.

The Margaret Fuller Bicentennial Committee is a grassroots group which has organized a wonderful, full schedule of events across the year in New York, New England, and even in Italy. Events include plays, tours, lectures, displays, conferences, and worship services. To check for the full roster of events, go to www.margaretfuller.org. You can also make donations via that website, and further donations are very much needed. Also watch the website, because there may be some contests announced for sermons and stories.

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There is also a UUA Committee, on which UUHS Vice President Mark Harris sits, and they have arranged to bring some superb lecturers to the 2010 UUA General Assembly.

Your personal contribution to celebrating Margaret's 200th birthday? Every Unitarian Universalist congregation is encouraged to use Sunday, May 23, 2010 to celebrate.

History Convocation in October, 2010

The idea of a History Convocation that would bring together dozens of people from across the continent has been discussed for several years. This event is now being planned. The Partners in Unitarian Universalist History and Heritage, in collaboration with Collegium: An Association for Liberal Religious Studies, are doing the groundwork for this event.

After exploring a number of potential locations in the Midwest and New England and a variety of times, October 8-10 in the Boston area was chosen for the Convo, in part because Collegium, which has an active History section, will meet in the same conference center October 7-9. The Universalist Heritage Foundation is planning to offer tour opportunities following the Convo, and there may be other "bonus events" before or after the Convo itself.

For now, save the dates, save up your frequent flyer miles, load up on ideas you would like to share and questions you would like to ask or debate, and watch for more details to be announced soon.

This is one very important and exciting result of the new Partners umbrella organization being formed. The intersecting strengths of the four Partners and Collegium should produce an outstanding Convocation.

UUHS Membership Renewal

If you are receiving this newsletter by mail, check your mailing label. It gives the expiration date of your membership.

If you are receiving it by e-mail (part of our stewardship of your dues money and the volunteer time to prepare mailings), the subject line of the e-mail will indicate whether it's time to renew your membership.

For the 2008-9 fiscal year the membership renewal notices went out very late. With a mailing just prior to General Assembly this June we tried to get back on the schedule dictated by our fiscal year, but that may have confused some people who said, "But I just paid this."

Your Historical Society is largely dependent on your dues payments to fund the Journal of Unitarian Universalist History, the UUHS website including the Dictionary of Unitarian Universalist Biography, the History Chat list, the annual Conrad Wright Lecture each spring, a presence in the display area at General Assemblies, the Youth History Prize essay contest, and occasional publication or re-publication projects such as Charles Lyttle's Freedom Moves West.

Membership payments may be sent to UUHS, 27 Grove Street, Scituate, MA 02066. Membership payments may also be made via the UUHS website using Paypal. You will note there that a multi-year membership option is now available. The rates are now \$30 for one year, \$50 for two years, and \$70 for three years. A household membership (2 ballots) is \$45 and the student rate remains at \$15 per year.

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Video History

Ron Cordes, creator of “Wilderness Journey,” a video history of the Empowerment Controversy in the UUA, has envisioned a video treatment of Unitarian and Universalist history in Europe and America. He met with the UUHS Board at its July meeting to discuss and refine his ideas, and is now pursuing grants to do preliminary video shooting.

Annual Meeting

Our By-laws specify that the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Historical Society “shall be held at such time and place as may be selected for the annual General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association.” Changing patterns of GA programming have trimmed the UUHS “annual meeting” to nothing more than an announcement of the results of an election conducted by mail.

Would you attend a more robust annual meeting held over breakfast or lunch at a restaurant in the vicinity of General Assembly? We would at least have the opportunity to share ideas, answer questions, question answers, and see each other face-to-face. You are invited to send your opinions to UUHS President Gordon Gibson at ggibson@uuma.org.

Remembering Tim Jensen

Tim Jensen, a member of the UUHS Board, died on Sunday, August 9, at the University of California at Davis Medical Center. Maybe he was trying to preach to us; his brother reports that death occurred at 11 a.m. Tim was a PhD historian (with a dissertation on the Wares) and an active parish minister, whose last settlement was at the First Parish in Portland, Maine. He chronicled his 18 month bout with cancer in a poignant and often humorous blog, *OneDayIsle*, to Tim Jensen (continuation of story)

which he had last posted on August 1. Although illness had limited his involvement recently, he had looked forward to continuing his service to the UUHS. He will be missed by all who knew him personally, and by many who knew him through posts on the history chat or other contributions to taking our history seriously.

Youth History Prize 2010

The UUHS website now lists details on the Youth History Prize for 2010. Please pass word of this to youth, youth advisers, religious educators, and ministers of your acquaintance. It is a wonderful opportunity for youth in our congregations to become chroniclers of our heritage.

The 2009 prize-winning essay is currently published on the UUHS website. Olivia Spooner, the author of the 2009 essay, wrote about the shooting that killed two people at the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church in 2008. In a recent newspaper interview Spooner, who was a cast member of the play that was interrupted by the shooting, said that writing the essay helped her to gain a different perspective on what she had experienced. “I had to look at the facts as if I weren’t there,” the Knoxville News Sentinel quotes her as saying.

A young person you know could be next year’s winner of the cash prize and publication, but only if you let them know of the opportunity.

Gordon Gibson, President