

 **the**
FELLOWTARIAN

Newsletter of the Unitarian Fellowship of West Chester

Web Edition – No Personal Phone Numbers or Addresses

Telephone: 610-692-5966

Web: www.ufwc.org

Rev. Larry Smith, Minister 610-692-5966 minister

Office/Administrative Assistant 610-692-5966 office

Flo Miller, President president

Pam Baxter, Dir. of Religious Ed dre

Steve and Linda Sander, Editors fellowtarian

SPECIAL ISSUE -- AUGUST, 2005

FROM THE PRESIDENT

“YOU GUYS ARE DOING GREAT THINGS.”

That was the reaction of Bob Johnson, Director of Growth and Extension for the Joseph Priestley District, on reading our application for a two-year Growth Consultancy. With help from others, I filled out the application, which required us to describe in detail the many activities, programs, and initiatives we have in place in our Fellowship. I can tell you that Bob Johnson’s reaction was right on the mark.... We are truly “on the move” and “doing great things.”

As many of you know, the consultancy has now been approved. It will be launched with a special service on August 28 at which Rev. Tom Chulak from the Unitarian Universalist As-

sociation will speak on “The Fire of Commitment.” Please see the separate article in this Fellowtarian on the August 28 service.

I think it’s worth providing a short review of what the consultancy is all about, especially given the many new members and friends in our Fellowship. The Joseph Priestley District is comprised of congregations in southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, D.C. and northern Virginia. Congregations in the Philadelphia/Wilmington area formed a “Metro Growth Committee” two years ago and devised a plan for the growth of Unitarian Universalism in our

area. The committee’s final “Vital Congregations Report” was released last spring.

As outlined in the final report, part of the growth plan involves the formation of a new, mid-sized congregation under the sponsorship of the Main Line Unitarian Church in northern Chester County. The impact of that new congregation on our own commitment to grow has been the subject of much discussion and some concern among our members. In partial recognition of that fact, the Joseph Priestley District has offered us this consultancy free of charge.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT (Continued)

The other two congregations (Pottstown and Thomas Paine) in close proximity to the new church have been also given the opportunity to apply for help with growth issues if they wish. The intent is to see all congregations in the Philadelphia area grow.

Rev. Chulak will be meeting with the Fellowship Leadership Team after the August 28 service. Thereafter, a "Bridging Team" of 3-4 members will be appointed to work directly with him over the next two years. The Bridging Team will be reporting back to the leadership and, through the leadership, to the congregation. I'm excited about the opportunity we have been given and believe we will receive valuable assistance in our own passage to growth over the next two years.

One other important issue has been decided this summer. After much discussion and an exploration of what would be involved, we determined that it would be best not to file for a Chalice Lighters Grant in July but to wait until December. Important decisions relative to future staffing and programming were attached to the application process, and we did not wish to make those decisions hurriedly or without input from key leaders. Many of those key leaders were out of town in July.

The budget, which included income from a Chalice

Lighters grant, has been adjusted with no significant impact on our programs. We were helped in that regard by a larger-than-anticipated carryover. The Board approved the revised budget in July.

I hope you are enjoying a relaxing summer and that I will see you on August 28 if not sooner. If you have any questions about this column or other issues in the Fellowship, don't hesitate to let me know.

— Flo Miller

AN IMPORTANT REMINDER

Thank you to everyone who has made a financial pledge to the Transition Fund. As you know, this Fund was established to help the Fellowship handle a number of the one-time expenses associated with our ambitious growth initiative and ministerial search. Since many of these expenses will be incurred early in our new fiscal year, please make every effort to fulfill your pledge as early as possible.

— Erach Patel
Executive Treasurer

COME TO OUR AUGUST 28 SERVICE

All members and friends of the Fellowship are encouraged to take time out of their late summer vacation to attend our special service on August 28th featuring Rev. Tom Chulak, a growth consultant with the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Rev. Chulak's talk on "The Fire of Commitment" should energize and inspire us as we begin an especially challenging year for our Fellowship. Equally important, the service will serve as the launching point for our two-year constancy with Rev. Chulak. This service represents his first opportunity to meet us as a congregation, and it's our first opportunity to meet him as well. It's important that as many of us as possible attend.

Because late August is typically a time when newcomers to a community go "church shopping" we'll also be promoting this service on our website and through the press. You are invited to do the same among your non-church-going friends and to bring a friend or two if you'd like.

Our Director of Religious Education, Pam Baxter, will be planning activities for children during the service. It will begin at our regular summer service time of 10:30 a.m. Double services will not get underway until after Labor Day.

Let's pack the sanctuary for this special service and give Rev. Chulak a resounding Fellowship welcome!

BOARD MEETING REPORT -- JULY 12, 2005

The Fellowship Board took these actions:

- Passed a resolution endorsing the majority of the growth initiatives outlined in the Vital Congregations Report issued by the Philadelphia/Metro Growth Committee of the Joseph Priestley District. At the same time, The Board in its resolution noted ongoing concerns over the portion of the report that calls for Main Line Unitarian Church's starting a new northern Chester County Congregation. The Board expressed the desire to dialogue with the Steering Committee for the new church with the hope that the Fellowship's concerns would be addressed. The resolution, therefore, did not represent a blanket endorsement of the Vital Congregations Report but did positively address many of its aspects and kept the door open for our input into planning for the new church.
- Accepted the Manual of Personnel Policies and Procedures developed by the Personnel Committee for review and adoption at a later date with possible revisions. The Board thanked the Personnel Committee for the extensive work that went into this comprehensive manual, which was six

months in the making and drew from the UUA's Personnel Policy example and the manual used by Main Line. Members of the committee include Susan Gast (chair), Linda Sander, Kathy Neary, and Jeff Kriebel.

- Accepted and endorsed the Report of the Long-Range Planning Committee as the foundation for more formal three and five year plans needed to comply with grant applications and as the foundation for needed changes to support our growth. Many of these changes have already been implemented in accordance with the plan. The Board also recognized

the tremendous effort and contribution of the Long Range Planning Committee, thanked its members for the dedication and sense of purpose that the report represents, and resolved to continue the work started with the report. Committee members included Flo Miller and Betty Grosse (co-chairs), Shelly Case, Brad Daniels, Don Miles, Alan Pittenger and Tom Townsend. Because she had co-chaired the committee, Flo Miller abstained from the discussion and vote on this issue.

— Submitted by Flo Miller
in the absence of Board
Secretary Paul Sapko

AN EXCEPTIONAL EFFORT

Thanks to the dedication and ceaseless hard work on the part of our Building Committee, the floor in the downstairs Religious Education area has been re-done. It is beautiful! A great deal of work has also been done in the kitchen area; that work was being completed as this article was written.

Emptying the basement of furniture so the floor could be redone – and then putting the furniture back in when the floor was finished – involved many of our members. But the real credit for an exceptional effort goes to our building co-chairs, Tilo Stahl and Bob Radcliffe, and the members of their committee. These guys never quit!

Our other committees – Religious Education, Religious Services, Music, Membership, Fun and Fellowship – have also been busy at work. As a result, we are just about ready for double services in September. We can and should all be proud of what we have accomplished in just a few months.

