



# JPD Newsletter

Connecting all Unitarian Universalists in the Joseph Priestley District:  
Southern New Jersey, Delaware, Eastern and Central Pennsylvania, Maryland,  
March-April, 2005 District of Columbia, Northern Virginia Vol. 10 No. 4

## Congregation of Columbia, MD Joins Local Foundation for Political/Social Justice Efforts

Starting a third year of social witness and advocacy, the Social Action Council of UU Congregation of Columbia, MD will financially aid and support the development of an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation.

IAF helps organizations, including congregations, to form a broad political base, with social change within communities as a goal.

SAC believes affiliation with other congregations may promote interfaith relationships and influence politicians to focus on issues for improving community life.

The Council also reported on activities in 2004 that included signing an amicus curiae brief supporting a lawsuit that would allow nine same-sex couples to marry and a project, under review, to aid a Domestic Violence Center. The church also donated books, computers, and tables to a local school.

Through its Second Sunday collections initiated last year, the congregation raised \$4,206, with half going to UUA for anti-racism and anti-economic oppression projects and the remainder going to the congregation for similar efforts.

## UU Harrisburg's Freedom to Marry Group Launches Study Program on Marriage

As a first step in an education program, the Lay-Led Ministry on Freedom to Marry will sponsor a study course on the history of marriage, the impact of the right to marry on gay couples and their families, related subjects.

In January, the group sponsored a three-session UUA workshop on the book, "What Is Marriage For?" by E. J. Gaff.

Following the education orientation, the group plans to "take our support to the streets to make the larger community aware that the U Church of Harrisburg supports gay marriage."

## York UUs Begin Experiment as Teaching Congregation

Growing out of a suggestion from Rev. Dr. Richard G. Speck, District Executive, Joseph Priestley District, the York, PA board and congregation recently began an experiment as a "teaching congregation."

This provides a part-time, field study placement for a UU ministry student, offering hands-on learning experience, with support of ministers, congregation and a special committee.

## Bicycle Sabbatical Aids DC Health Clinic

With the start of his six-month sabbatical in February, (he is also marking 30 years in the ministry) Rev. Scott W. Alexander, senior minister of River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD, with 30 other cyclists, set forth on a transcontinental ride from Irvine, CA to Boston, MA. Church members and friends may contribute a nickel or dime for each mile, with the proceeds going to La Clinica del Pueblo, a DC health clinic supported by River Road.

Since this 31-day ride (110 miles per day) will use only a small slice of the sabbatical, Rev. Alexander will spend the remainder writing a book, reading, conference-going, and maybe some volunteer time at a charter school.

And here we thought sabbaticals had to do with meditation, soul-enriching woodland walks, and a certain amount of well-deserved lazing around.

## Annual Retreat: JPD Women and Religion April 22-24, 2005

Retreat Center, near Lancaster, PA, off Route 30  
"Unraveling the Gender Knot: Challenging  
the System that Binds Us"

*Speaker:* Dr. Barbara Schonborn, co-author of the new religious education curriculum for UU adults and youth, *Unraveling the Gender Knot*.

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## JPD Churches Help Tsunami Victims

Reports from six JPD churches and fellowships show that by the end of January, donations channeled through the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee to aid Tsunami victims totaled \$18,656.

Other churches scheduled February fund-raising events, whose results were not yet available.

Those reporting so far were: UU Church in Cherry Hill, NJ; UU Church of Annapolis, MD; Accotink UU Church, Burke, VA; UU Fellowship of Lower Bucks, Langhorne, PA; UU Fellowship of Southern Maryland, Leonardtown, MD; Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda, MD; and UU Church of Delaware County, Media, PA.

## Wilmington Close to \$3 Million Building Goal, Others Move Ahead on Expansion Plans

First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, DE has received \$2.8 million in pledges toward its \$3-million goal for construction of a new sanctuary, renovation to the existing sanctuary into a large parish hall, and a connecting facility between the two.

The capital campaign began last October and construction is expected to begin this spring.

In other district churches a variety of improvement and renovation projects are also underway.

From the Green Sanctuary Committee of Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, Alexandria, VA, has come a proposal for a "green roof" for a new addition to the church. Green roofs, flat or slightly pitched, are planted with sedums that grow to a fixed height. They are attractive, require low maintenance, improve rainwater management, building thermal performance, and air quality. The congregation has raised \$1.26 million toward its \$2-million goal.

Before the end of 2004, River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD launched a supplemental capital campaign for construction of a "bridge" addition with a fellowship room and kitchen, classrooms and other facilities, as well as renovations to an existing building.

Scheduled for this spring is a capital campaign voted on by the UU Congregation of the South Jersey Shore, Oceanville, NJ. The goal is \$275,000 for construction of a church.

## What's Happening....

The Habitat Committee of the UU Church of Annapolis plans to build in 2005, hoping to raise \$21,000 and commit volunteers for 16 Sundays....Accotink UU Church, Burke, VA celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, kicks off the event with a fund-raising dinner for sprucing up its building....UU Fellowship of Centre County, State College, PA now has 91 Chalice Lighters, with new pledges raising \$2,145....An opera written by Tom Benjamin, music director, UU Congregation of Columbia, MD will have its world premiere March 9-14 at Baltimore's Peabody Opera Theatre....Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, PA has created a new lay-led ministry to serve as a clearing house for justice-related issues and organizations...

*What We Care About.... UUs of the Cumberland Valley, Boiling Springs, PA initiated a new social action project to provide \$150 for each of 25 girls in Mozambique, Africa. It enables them to attend upper primary school for a year. The funds were raised by selling fair trade chocolate and chutney at local farmers' markets, donations to Change for the World collections, and pledges from members and UUs from other churches....UU Fellowship of Harford County, Churchville, MD sent 105 pounds of toiletries to American troops in Iraq. Snacks for Soldiers is their next project....There was a Teddy Bear's picnic at UU Church of Delaware County, Media, PA when, for Valentine's Day, its RE children collected more than 400 teddy bears, (and a stuffed dinosaur or two), for children (and adults!) at a homeless center and a Juvenile Detention Home.*

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