

# **Minister's Annual Report (2010)**

## **Rev. Sam Trumbore**

With pleasure I begin this annual report celebrating the health and vitality of our congregation. This year we saw significant membership growth while fending off the financial stresses that have dogged other religious organizations in our denomination and in our area. While as I write this report, we are concerned about achieving our canvass goal this year, we can feel very good about the strong commitment of our members to FUUSA and the financial health of our congregation.

### **Chris Antal's Internship**

The big event in our ministry has been having our part-time ministerial intern, Chris Antal. Many have enjoyed and found value in the services he has led, the classes he has taught and his attentive pastoral care skills. Chris' commission as a second lieutenant in the Army has stimulated reflection on our congregation's relationship to war, on the soldiers who go to and return from war, and on making peace. Having an intern has refreshed my ministry as I guide and teach Chris about how to be an effective Unitarian Universalist minister. We, as a congregation, have greatly appreciated Chris' internship with us and wish him all the best in his chaplaincy work.

### **Fall CRUUNY Media Campaign**

In the spring of 2009, visionary leaders from Glens Falls, Saratoga Springs, Schenectady and Albany gathered to kick off our fund-raising drive for a fall media campaign. We raised almost \$25,000 for the campaign we called, "Shout it Out." I worked closely with Kathy McGowan from Schenectady and Valerie Holton from the UUA to structure the campaign message and decide where to advertise. Our growth in membership this year is definitely linked with that campaign. We will be doing another one this coming fall thanks to the Chalice Lighters grant CRUUNY received.

### **Dream Catchers Report**

Those of us who worked hard on the Dream Catcher's report were thrilled to see the Strategic Plan that came out of our work pass almost unanimously. The report effectively translates the mission of our congregation into action. Unitarian Universalist congregations thrive on the doing part of religion so having a plan of action will help us prioritize and direct our energy and resources this coming year.

The proposal to add a quarter-time minister was one of the first proposals put forward by the Board of Trustees' Personnel Task Force responding to the strategic plan. While the vision presented by the Task Force was a good one, the timing may not have been. I do remember saying at the meeting that passed the Strategic Plan did not imply staffing increases necessarily. Valuing having an intern this year may have accelerated the presentation a little too quickly for some. Depending on our canvass goal being reached, we may not be talking about this at all. No matter what happens, more discernment is needed about what staff to add when and in response to what level of membership growth.

The quarter-time minister proposal partly came in response to the resignation of our membership coordinator, Lynne Lekakis. In anticipation of the Strategic Plan being passed in December, the Executive Committee in consultation with the Personnel Committee recommended to the Board that the position not be filled immediately. The interim solution developed was to give some of the job to Amy Lent, some to our intern Chris Antal, and the rest returned to the Membership Committee. The

building rental function was taken out of Amy's job and then given to Lynne Lekakis, temporarily creating the position of building agent. Part of the membership coordinator function was to be picked up by the quarter time minister once Chris' internship is complete. All these interim solutions will need attention if a quarter-time minister is not hired. The good news is Lynne is doing a great job renting our building and Amy loves her Sunday morning membership function.

#### NVC and Adult Ed work

One tradeoff for me of the additional supervision of an intern is doing less Adult Religious Education this year. The Rev. Deane Perkins, minister in Glens Falls, Philomena Moriarty Trumbore and I did a Saturday workshop in January titled, "The Beauty of Needs." This class presented some of the basic ideas of Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication program. The class was very successful with good attendance. Philomena and I have followed up with a "practice group" on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to practice the skills learned in two eight session classes over four months. I also repeated my Lenten class using Buddhist-Christian dialogue as this year's theme. I've participated as a student in Chris Antal and Jacqui Williams Building the World We Dream About class.

#### UU University Student Group

One exciting development was the interest by new member and RPI student Bruce King to start a Unitarian Universalist Student Group at RPI. The first meeting I attended had seven interested UU students. The group ran until November then ran out of steam over the holidays. A number of the students this year are freshmen so I hope to get the group to meet one last time in the spring then get started again in the fall.

#### Soul Matters and Small Group Ministry

I researched an alternative way to do Small Group Ministry used at First Unitarian in Rochester called 'Soul Matters.' My initial hope was changing to this model would revitalize our Small Group Ministry program. The focus of Soul Matters follows one of the recommendations of the Dream Catchers to provide opportunities for spiritual deepening and personal growth. Soul Matters connects the worship life of the congregation with small groups and provides an intellectual and experiential approach using the Sunday service themes. To initiate this change, I took over the role of leading the facilitators group.

Unfortunately, the change encountered problems for a number of reasons. The change to meeting once a month rather than twice a month may also have weakened group commitment. The original Soul Matters plan is likely to be modified for next year, and we may go back to the old Small Group Ministry model. Stay tuned to your next Windows.

#### ARISE work – Relationship with Ed Smart – SMART board project

With the termination of ARISE's Organizer last June, ARISE has struggled to recover from a fundraiser that lost much more money than came in. I worked on a plan to recruit new religious organizations that was unsuccessful. The organization continues to flounder and lose members. Its days may be numbered. This has been a source of grief for me as I served as its second President for three years, a time when it had strong support in our congregation. Now that support has waned and I'm decreasing my time commitment to the organization. It may need to die and be reborn in a new form with new leadership. I'm grateful for the ways I have grown as a leader as part of ARISE and the many relationships I've developed with clergy in Schenectady, Albany and Troy that will endure. My plan for

social outreach is to coordinate my community work more closely with the Social Responsibilities Council priorities.

### War Healing Ministry

I worked with Chris Antal to help him launch the War Healing Ministry, a partnership of our congregation with Soldier's Heart. We had a moving service to inaugurate the ministry on March 28, followed by a light supper, then a healing circle. Chris' commanding officer was here and gave some inspiring remarks during the service. Beth Miller, director of the ministry department for the UUA came to show support. We had 48 people participating in the service, most stayed for food and fellowship, and about 28 stayed for the first circle. The second circle April 11 had about 12 people. The conversation and stories shared were both moving and inspiring. Serving returning vets and helping them reintegrate into society by assisting them to work through their emotional wounds is a great ministry for our congregation to offer. It is my sincere hope that this ministry will continue beyond Chris' service with us and spread to other religious organizations.

### Plans for next year:

Normally my Annual Report reviews what I've done in the past year. This year, I'd like to look ahead to some of what is coming this fall. The Strategic Plan will be driving my goals for next year. Two of them I'd like to highlight.

### Theme Based Ministry

The Strategic Plan directs us to “To provide positive opportunities for FUUSAns to explore, share and deepen their beliefs, values and personal search for meaning.” One way to do that is by moving toward an approach to having monthly topics for Sunday morning services. A topic that points toward our core values is chosen for the month to coordinate programming from the pulpit, to the classroom, to social outreach, to small group ministry. The goal is deepening, growing, and developing our inner lives. We'll be experimenting with this approach beginning in October.

### Pastoral Care Associate program

Being in community means supporting each other in our sorrows and concerns as well as celebrating our joys. When one of us reaches out to someone else with compassion, both are nourished and the community is strengthened. And, practically speaking, our congregation is just too large for one minister to do all the pastoral care our congregation wants and needs. We do have a wonderful Caring Network willing to drive people to appointments, bring in a covered dish, provide respite care, send cards, etc. They do a great job – but they are not trained to offer lay pastoral support.

This is why Rev. Sam has been working with Intern Chris Antal, President Linda Way, Caring Network Chair Sharon Babala, Director of Religious Education Leah Purcell and Ellis Hospital Chaplain Bobbi Place, to develop a **Pastoral Care Associate** program. Pastoral Care Associates will be trained to offer pastoral listening and emotional support to members and friends of our congregation. This will extend pastoral care to more people *who are not in crisis* than Rev. Sam can counsel. Rev. Sam will continue to offer as much and probably more pastoral care as well as supervise the Pastoral Care Associate team. The goal of this program is to *multiply* the amount of pastoral care our congregation can give to our membership. The program will get started this coming fall.

## Conclusions

Having our new Strategic Plan in place has caused me to review my priorities and time commitments. I'm already realigning where I put my time and energy to assist in implementing that plan. The three main changes will be making changes that will excite, inspire, and deepen people's experience on Sunday morning, multiply our ability to offer pastoral care and more closely align my outreach in the community with the work of the Social Responsibilities Council. I believe these changes will, in a sense, reinvent my ministry for a new era in our congregation's growth and development.

I continue to delight in serving this congregation and am committed to my own growth and development in my ministry. My greatest joy is being of service to members and friends of FUUSA in their growth and development through all the different aspects of our program. Please let me know how I may serve you as your minister more effectively.