



# The Flaming Chalice

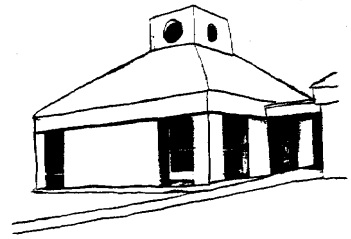
## Unitarian Universalist Church of Valdosta

Located at: 1951 East Park Avenue  
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### What's going on... **May 2013**

T	April 30	3:30-5 PM 7-8:30 PM	Visiting Tibetan Buddhist Llama , "Positive Motivation and Conduct from a Buddhist Perspective at the VSU Continuing Education Building. Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche Teaching Session #1 at UU church
W	May 1	3:30-5 PM 6 PM 7-8:30 PM	Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche Teaching Session #2 at UU church Board Meeting in the RE wing at the church Rinpoche Refuge Ceremony and White Tara Empowerment at UU church
Th	May 2	10-11:30 AM Noon	Rinpoche previously arranged <u>private</u> interviews at the UU church VAMA Interfaith Day of Prayer at MLK Memorial
Sun	May 5	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service - "Mending Wall ," Rev. Fred Howard Meet & Greet Coffee after the service Power of Myth Class after Meet and Greet
F	May 10	6:30 PM	Book discussion and potluck at the church
Sun	May 12	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service - "Sexuality, Spirituality, and Christianity," Dr. Michael Stoltzfus Meet & Greet Coffee after the service <i>Mother's Day</i>
M	May 13	11:00AM	Break Bread delivery
W	May 15		<i>Deadline for June newsletter</i>
F	May 17	6:30 PM	Pizza and a Movie at the church
Sun	May 19	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service - "Lessons from a Toolshed," Rev. Fred Howard <i>Share the Plate Sunday</i> Meet & Greet Coffee after the service Power of Myth Class after the meeting
F	May 24	6:30 PM	Games Night at the church
Sun	May 26	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service - "A Cuban Experience," Dr. M. Elizabeth Derrick, Meet & Greet Coffee after the service

*May* ... Come, volunteer, contribute, join---we miss you when you are absent---we enjoy your presence---Come!

## Sunday Services

### Sunday, May 5 – “Rev. Fred Howard, “Mending Wall”

If you are familiar with the works of Robert Frost, you will recognize the title of this sermon as it comes from one of his most famous poems. There is much going on in this classic work of poetry. It’s not only a classic expression of the American character and American rugged individualism; a deeper analysis shows that its author had a profound grasp of the necessary ingredients for healthy human relationships. Please join me this morning as I probe this fascinating work to see what truths it has to teach us.

### Sunday, May 12 - Dr. Michael Stoltzfus, “Sexuality, Spirituality, and Christianity”

Sexual intimacy can serve as a resource for spiritual transformation and renewal in our lives. Through it, we can experience a restored sense of healing, joy, passionate relationship, creative potency, and wondrous pleasure. However, the goodness of sexuality can be skewed, denied, or even destroyed by any number of means. We will explore the strengths and weaknesses of traditional approaches to Christian sexual ethics, explore the links between spirituality and embodiment, and connect the teachings of Jesus with the celebration of sensuous presence.

### Sunday, May 19 - Rev. Fred Howard, “Lessons from a Toolshed”

The modern mind is obsessed with being objective. It’s true that studying something “objectively,” as science has done with the material world, can vastly expand our ability to understand and even to manipulate our environment. And no one can argue with the successes of science in making our lives healthier and more comfortable. This way of apprehending our world though has come to flavor the way we look at every subject at our disposal. What have we lost in the process, as we have largely bought into the idea that this is always the best way to understand our world? This morning I will attempt to get “a perspective” on perspective, if you will, using an illustration from my own backyard.

*Share the Plate Sunday Offering: Donations to the offering plate not designated for pledges will be donated to the Lowndes Area Crisis Care (LACC). LACC is a newly developing church coalition project, organized by the Valdosta Area Ministerial Association (VAMA) to provide short-term financial help for those in emergency need. Individuals seeking assistance will be referred to LACC to help determine the best way to help during financial crises. Rev. Fred Howard is involved in this new endeavor which will take the place of the Helpers Unlimited program previously run by Lowndes Associated Ministries to the People (LAMP). See Rev. Howard’s column in the April newsletter for more information.*

### Sunday, May 26 – Dr. M. Elizabeth Derrick, “A Cuban Experience”

This morning Betty Derrick will share some of her experiences travelling in Cuba this past fall. While there she attended a Santeria ceremony. Santeria, which is once again practiced openly in Cuba, originated there during the slave trade. Its practices are a combination of Yoruba and Roman Catholic beliefs and rituals. Come learn something about

Santeria and this country, just to our south, still largely closed to the travel of US citizens. Betty is a long time member of our congregation and editor of the newsletter.

### “The Power of Myth” Class

After the service until 1PM

Fred Howard is facilitating this class using video from the popular PBS series of conversations between the mythologist Joseph Campbell and journalist Bill Moyers. The class will continue for a few more sessions, meeting after Meet and Greet on the Sundays Rev. Howard is in charge of the Sunday service.

## Religious Education

**For Children:** The RE program for children under 15 years of age meets at 10:45 AM concurrent with the Sunday morning service. Older young people will remain with the adult service. Two adults are needed each Sunday to help with RE. Sign up on the weekly e-mail volunteer list or let Sue Bailey know if you can help on a given Sunday.

### Sangha Tuesdays

5:30-7:00 PM at the church

The KTD Buddhist reading and meditation group meets on Tuesday evenings at the church. Everyone interested in Buddhist practice and meditation is welcome. Tea, 5:30-6: Buddhist shamata meditation, 6-6:30; Discussion of reading, 6:30-7. Participants should supply their own pillow for sitting, although using a chair for those unable to sit on the floor is allowed. The group shares books and the liturgy.

### Teachings by Venerable Khenpo Karthar Rinpoché

April 30 – May 1

Members and friends of our congregation are welcome to participate in these sessions sponsored by the KTD Buddhist group. Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche, Abbot of Karma Triyana Dharmachakra Monastery in Woodstock, New York and one of the few remaining senior Tibetan lamas trained in Tibet before the Chinese invasion, will give a public talk on positive motivation and conduct from a Buddhist perspective. at the VSU Regional Center for Continuing Education on Tuesday, April 30, 3:30-5 PM. (The continuing Ed Center is located at 903 N Patterson St.) There will be several teaching sessions held at the UU Church to which interested persons are welcome also. These will be held: April 30 7-8:30 PM and May 1 3:30-5 PM. Please see Julie Halter if you would like more information or would like to know about several other sessions planned during the visit. Suggested donations for the sessions: \$10 for public talk, \$25 per session for teachings and empowerment.

### INVITATION TO MEMBERSHIP

If you are interested in becoming a member of our fellowship, we encourage you to talk with our minister, Rev. Fred Howard or our President, Carol Stiles, or Membership Director, Kimberly Tanner. We welcome your questions, and we extend an open invitation to all who want to join our liberal community of faith.



## MINISTERIAL MUUSINGS

Rev. Fred Howard

May 2013

Whew! We've been so busy at Valdosta UU that I've lost all sense of how rapidly this year has gone by. Hard to believe summer's nearly here. Looking back on the past year though, we have accomplished so much and we have much to be proud of.

In September we began a yearlong class on The Power of Myth. This has been our best attended religious education class ever. Kimberly and I also instituted brief All About UU classes after our services for newcomers. Those who have participated have been most appreciative of this effort as it gives newcomers a chance to learn more about us at the point of contact. This effort may also have played a role in our improved retention of newcomers.

We instituted a caring committee headed by Dee to take care of emergency needs for our members and friends during health crises and other family disruptions. Many have already benefitted from this initiative.

In November we continued our congregation's tradition of active participation in the Habitat for Humanity build. In December we began a new tradition of caroling at Wild Adventures. Those who participated in these events enjoyed the wonderful sense of community they generated.

In January we held a Compassionate Communication Workshop with Rev. LoraKim Joyner. Many from our congregation participated enthusiastically in this event and because of the interest in the subject generated by the workshop there are ongoing discussions about beginning a regular ongoing Compassionate Communication group. Also in January we held a joint service with Lighthouse Christian Fellowship Center on MLK Sunday which was also a great success.

In February Sue provided leadership to continue our annual Rainbow Mixer around Valentine's Day and, besides being great fun, it continues to be a great outreach ministry for us. During February our congregation also provided much volunteer effort toward VAMA's Coffeehouse to benefit the homeless.

In March I took committed to be a part of the steering committee for the newly forming Lowndes Area Crisis Care to provide emergency financial assistance to our citizens in need. Our congregation has also agreed to provide volunteers and regular financial assistance to this endeavor.

Besides all these activities, we have continued to offer regular programs and activities at our church like the movie nights, book club, and the firepit and games night. More groups that espouse our values, such as the yoga classes and the Survivors of Suicide support groups, are now using our facility.

Our community continues to grow in its depth of commitment and degree of involvement. We are also growing in numbers. Thank you for allowing me to be your minister this past year. It continues to be a great honor for me to serve in that capacity.

In Faith and Community, Fred

Fred Howard is our part time minister. You may contact Rev. Howard by email (preferable) at [fredhoward3622@gmail.com](mailto:fredhoward3622@gmail.com). He is available for consultations on Monday and Wednesday afternoons on most weeks from 2-5PM by appointment. Fred welcomes any questions you may have about membership in our congregation. He is also available for weddings and rites of passage ceremonies by prearrangement.

S-O-S VALDOSTA

### VALDOSTA SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE SUPPORT GROUP

This support group hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Valdosta is facilitated by Tamara Hardesty. The group meets at the church on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 8 P.M. Contact via e-mail at [sosvaldosta@yahoo.com](mailto:sosvaldosta@yahoo.com) or connect online at **VALDOSTA SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE SUPPORT GROUP** or 'Like' us on **facebook** for online support, daily affirmations, links to resources, and information on upcoming meetings.

## Social Action Activities

### Break Bread Together

Our date for meal deliveries with the Break Bread Together program is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday (and 5<sup>th</sup> when there is one) of each month. If you would like to help deliver meals beginning about 11:00 AM, please contact Frank or Rosie Asbury.

**UU Valdosta Caring Committee** Contact Dee Tait if you or someone you know needs the services of this committee.

### VAMA's Interfaith Day of Prayer

Thursday, May 2 at noon

### MLK Jr Memorial

The Valdosta Area Ministerial Association (VAMA) service will be held at the MLK Jr Memorial in downtown Valdosta. Many faith traditions will come together to show solidarity and offer prayers and meditations for our world and our life together in community. This is a great opportunity for our members and friends to come out and show support for interfaith dialogue here in Valdosta. Hope to see you there!

### Sexuality, Religion, and Faith

Wednesdays at 7 PM April 10-May 5 St. Barnabas Episcopal Church Adult Christian Education is sponsoring a discussion of where sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and faith intersect. The church is located at 4533 Bemiss Road. Speak to Dee Tait if you have questions about the series.

*"You might be a UU if you are uncertain about the gender of God."*

(From: G. Foss, *The Church Where People Laugh*)

## ABOUT OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

*Congratulations...*

To our members who have recently welcomed a new baby daughter to the family!

*Keep in your thoughts...*

Our members and friends dealing with family illness and our members and friends who will be travelling soon.

### Thank You! Thank You!

**For layleading services:** Doug Tanner, Dee Tait, Valerie Webster, Amanda Crossley

**For Sunday service music:** Rhett Watson, Carol Stiles, Kimberly Tanner

**For Stories for All Ages:** Sue Bailey, Fred Howard, Amy Wells

**For helping with Children's RE:** Sue Bailey Meredith Covert, Amy Wells, Emma Bailey, and Teagan Dunn, Rosie Asbury

**For serving as Meet and Greet Hosts:** Doug Tanner, Betty Derrick, Mary Ellen and Cliff Adams

**For greeting visitors:** Cliff Adams, Betty Derrick, Rose Baker, Amanda Crossley

**For delivering Break Bread meals:** Frank and Rosie Asbury, **For cleaning the church:** Frank Asbury

**For cleaning RE building restrooms:** Lars Leader

**For sweeping the sidewalk:** Mary Ellen and Cliff Adams, Bill Webster

**For arranging for replacement of the AC unit at the church:** Jim Ingram

**For the Easter Egg Hunt:** Eostre Hare for the wonderful Easter Egg Hunt and to everyone who contributed treats to help E. Hare

**For serving on the Nominating Committee:** Dee Tait(Chair), Dawn Renner, Betty Derrick



Tom Aiello signing membership book.

## Notes from Kids' RE - Sue Bailey

The Eostre Hare visited our church on Easter Sunday and left about 200 eggs for our egg hunt! Everyone had a wonderful time gathering their treats. Over the next few months the RE kids will be focusing on our 7th principle, "We believe in caring for our planet earth, the home we share with all living things." We'll be learning about animals from around the world in a variety of habitats. We'll discover how different plants and animals, including human beings, are connected in the great web of life. During recent lessons, we talked about spring as a time when our world wakes up, trees bud, flowers bloom, birds build nests, and babies of all kinds are born. We made several spring art projects including baby birds in a nest and a rocking bird from a folded paper plate and decorated with colorful tissue paper. We are looking forward to more lessons, art projects, and activities about our world, the home we share with all living things. As always, we welcome visitors to RE. If you would like to volunteer to be an RE helper, please see Sue Bailey.

Additional note from the newsletter editor: We often don't know what others, visitors to our building for example, are noticing. I thought Sue and the rest of you might like to know that several of the Tai Chi folks regularly check out the RE projects that Sue posts on our sanctuary walls. I had no idea, until a recent conversation, that they were so intrigued by the various projects. Thank you Sue for your energy and creativity---the lessons you bring to our young people and the, perhaps unintended but welcomed, good impression you and your small charges' projects bring to our community. Thank you!



Getting ready for the egg hunt

### Communicating at UU Valdosta

Newsletter Editor: Betty Derrick

Website Manager: Carol Stiles, [uuvaldosta@yahoo.com](mailto:uuvaldosta@yahoo.com)

e-Mail List: Contact Carol Stiles

Facebook: Kimberly Tanner

Local Publicity: Dee Tait

May 15: Deadline for the June newsletter.

*If you prefer reading this newsletter on the website, e-mail the editor to remove your name from the mailing label list.*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### CAROL STILES

This month I want to recognize some of our many volunteers! Those of you who attend services regularly see the names in the program – Sue Bailey, Religious Education director, rarely misses a Sunday morning leading fun and educational activities with the kids. Doug Tanner, Vice-President, often lay-leads or runs the CD player, makes coffee and helps with meet-n-greet, etc. More importantly, Doug, as Program Chair, makes sure there are other volunteers there to do everything else that makes our services run smoothly!

Then there are those behind the scenes – we've had a couple of people who regularly and anonymously clean the bathrooms in the RE building over the years. But this month, I particularly want to recognize Dr. Frank Asbury, who for the past 11 years (!) has been cleaning and vacuuming the sanctuary, mopping the kitchen floor, cleaning the toilet, and taking out trash – every week! Frank will be stepping down from this volunteer activity this summer and we owe him our great appreciation!

Of course, it will take a crew of volunteers to replace him...;) We've had one person step forward to help temporarily, but in the longer term, if you can help sometime during the week or early on Sunday to do one or more of these tasks in the sanctuary or RE building, please let me know.

Doug Tanner and Jim Ingram, Buildings and Grounds Chair, are often taking care of the buildings and grounds behind the scenes (remember that tree partially on the roof a few weeks ago? Thank you, Jim!). Unfortunately, one major project this month has been to make arrangements for the AC / heating unit serving the sanctuary to be replaced – after 15 years, the compressor had shorted out and the board voted to replace with a high energy efficiency unit. Clearly this is a major expense for our small congregation, and any one-time donation above your normal monthly pledge to help us pay for this new unit will be gratefully received. And, please, enjoy the cool air in the sanctuary this summer!

In community, Carol

## Let's Have Some Fun!!

### Book Discussion and Potluck

**Friday, May 10 6:30 PM - At the church**

The book is "Bless Me, Ultima" by Rudolfo Anaya. Quoting a reviewer: "Antonio Marez is six years old when Ultima comes to stay with his family in New Mexico. She is a curandera, one who cures with herbs and magic. Under her wise wing, Tony will test the bonds that tie him to his people, and discover himself in the pagan past, in his father's wisdom, and in his mother's Catholicism. And at each life turn there is Ultima, who delivered Tony into the world---and will nurture the birth of his soul." According to the New York times this book is "Probably the best-known and most-respected contemporary Chicano fiction."

Bring a dish to share. Coffee and tea will be provided. You are welcome to bring other beverages. We socialize over our potluck meal for the first hour and then promptly begin our book discussion drawing to a close with

the selection of our next book by about an hour later. We have been selecting books that deal with difference. Contact: Betty Derrick.

### PIZZA AND A MOVIE

**Friday, May 17**

**6:15 PM at the church**

The film is Gabriele Muccino's (2006) film *The Pursuit of Happyness*. Rated PG13. A donation for pizza and refreshments is \$5.00

For playing the real life character, Chris Gardner, in *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006), Will Smith was nominated for Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role. The actor's five-year-old son, Jaden Christopher Syre Smith, cast as Gardner's son, convincingly contributes to Smith's portrayal of a father facing consequences following disruption of his family and career ambitions thanks to his business misjudgments. Outcomes include making their apartment unaffordable and igniting a crisis resulting in Chris's shrewish wife, Linda (Thandie Newton), leaving him and their son on their own to fend for themselves among the homeless. Amazingly, despite his misfortunes and risks he brings upon himself and his son, as they bounce from shelter to shelter, Chris maintains his dignity, resolves to make the best of an opportunity as an unpaid intern, keeps his independence, and sustains his fatherly love. Unusual for Hollywood, a raw question cuts through this up-from-the-bootstraps movie: Is pursuit of Happyness (a misspelled frame of reference Chris encounters in the name of his son's day-care center) interchangeable with pursuit of money? He makes no apologies for his ambition not just to survive, but to achieve wealth as he puts his son and himself on the line to climb to the top rung of the trickle-down American economy experiencing hard times in the 1980s during the Reagan presidency. Matters of economic and social justice facing Chris appear familiar to film goers 25 years later when Social Darwinism brands people like him and his son expendable, collateral damage and unfit to survive the pursuit of the American Dream in predatory capitalism's jungle. To his credit, Chris beats odds set against him and his son, including racism, thanks to his capacity for hope in a seemingly hopeless situation. Contacts Fred Howard and David Rogers.

### Games Night

**Friday, May 24**

**6:30PM - until at the church**

Beginning this month, until it cools off and the bugs "settle down" in the fall, the Firepit will take a vacation. Watch for its return in September. **Games Night will continue though!** Often we play Mexican Train (dominoes), but we enjoy learning new games. If you have a game that is not limited to small numbers of players, please bring it along! Contact: Susan Bailey.



**UU Church of Valdosta Board of Directors Meeting News  
April 3, 2013**

(Note that some matters appear in articles and announcements elsewhere in this newsletter and are not repeated here. The full minutes are posted on the RE wing bulletin board after approval by the board.)

The UU Board discussed:

- spring work day scheduled for Saturday, April 27, 8:00 a.m. to noon.
- proposed budget for 2013-2014 to be presented at the congregational meeting on April 28.
- plans for summer programs, activities, and General Assembly.
  - next meeting, Wednesday, May 1, 6:00 p.m.

**Treasurer's Report – Rosie Asbury  
March 31, 2013**

<b>Receipts</b>	<b><u>March</u></b>	<b><u>July -present (9 mos.)</u></b>
Plate	\$ 76.39	1272.87
Pledge	1170.00	13792.00
Rent	260.00	2110.00
SharePlt(LAMP)	<u>165.00</u>	<u>1381.40</u>
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>\$1671.39</b>	<b>\$18556.27</b>
<b>Disbursements</b>		
Speakers' Fees	200.00	1600.00
Minister Exp.	1425.63	7263.78
Maint.	190.00	4391.16
Pest Control	35.00	315.00
Postage	6.44	6.44
Supplies	10.89	306.42
Utilities	442.92	2899.05
RE Program	0.00	10.59
Advertising	0.00	700.00
UUA Dues	484.00	1760.00
Donat. (LAMP)	165.00	1381.40
Others	<u>50.00</u>	<u>204.17</u>
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>\$ 3009.88</b>	<b>\$ 20838.01</b>
<b>Net Receipt</b>	<b>\$-1338.49</b>	<b>\$ -2281.74</b>

**Annual Congregational Meeting:** Watch for information about the annual congregational meeting in the June newsletter. The meeting was too late in April to be reported in this newsletter. New officers were elected for the coming church year which begins July 1. Thank you to all the current Board Members for their service this year and over the coming months until the transition occurs. Thank you to those who were reelected and will continue to serve.

**Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee is charged with preparing a slate of candidates to stand for election to the Board of Directors for 2013-2014. Those who have agreed to be nominated are Carol Stiles (President), Doug Tanner (Vice President), Rosie Asbury (Treasurer), Tom Aiello (Secretary), Kimberly Tanner (Membership), Jim Ingram (Building and Grounds). The Committee was composed of Dee Tait (Chair), Betty Derrick, and Dawn Renner.

**At the Church-in-the-Woods**

**New Hope Christian Community Church-** Sunday evenings: Choir practice at 4:30 PM. Service at 6:00 PM.  
<http://www.wix.com/nhccc1/nhccc>

**Taoist Tai Chi** – Monday and Thursday: Beginners Class 5:30-6:30 PM; Continuing Class 6:30-8 PM. Contact Dennis Bogyo or Luana Goodwin.

**HIV Support Meeting** - The 2nd Tuesday: 7:30 PM.

**South Georgia Pride** –3rd Tuesday each month, 7:30PM  
Contact Raynaé Jones

**PFLAG Meeting** – 4th Tuesday each month, 7:00PM  
Contact: Doug Tanner The web page for PFLAG Valdosta:  
<http://community.pflag.org/Valdosta>

**UU Activities and Announcements**

*May 18-UU Fellowship of Beaufort, SC, 10 AM -3 PM Preregistration by May 3. Welcoming Congregation Summit: Join Annette Marquis, LGBTQ and Multicultural Ministries Program Manager for the UUA, and leaders from other Southern Cluster congregations, as they explore practical and spiritual tools to assure that welcoming and inclusion are a part of your congregation's ongoing spiritual practice*  
*May 15-19-UU Womenspirit 2013 Spring Institute, The Mountain Retreat & Learning Center, Highlands, NC.*  
*May 31 – June 1(The Mountain, Highlands, NC )or June 7 – 9 (Dallas, TX) or June 7–9(UU Fellowship of Marion County, Summerfield, FL) - President's Convocation*  
*June 19-23-UUA General Assembly, Louisville,*

**We Know This, A Pastoral Message from UUA  
President Peter Morales**

April 16, 2013

Sadly, we are once again witnesses to senseless violence. New images of suffering, panic, and heroism burn themselves into our memory. Shock mixes with grief, disbelief, compassion and anger.

Monday's bombing at the finish line of the Boston Marathon occurred just blocks from the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) headquarters. As far as we know, all our staff are safe. Our prayers go out to the families of those who were killed and to all who have been injured. Beyond the physical injuries, many have been traumatized here and across the country.

At times like this our spiritual communities are more important than ever. This is a time for being together, for giving and taking comfort from one another. This is a time for reaching out, both to be comforted and to offer kindness.

At this time we do not know who did this or what twisted thinking produced this horrific act. We do know this: everything we do to spread compassion, understanding, acceptance, and peace matters. It is literally a matter of life and death.

May each of us find comfort and healing. May each of us find ways of letting our pain be transformed into acts of love and healing.

In Faith, Rev. Peter Morales



## UUA TRUSTEE TIDBITS

Joan Lund

May 2013

jlund@uaa.org

(As my Trustee term ends I will send one more column for June, 2013.)

For as long as I have been involved in UUism beyond my home congregation I have believed, to be effective, our social justice work should be linked with other faith groups working on similar or the same mandates. The Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC) is one such partnership of faith-based organizations committed to enacting fair and humane immigration reform. Coalition members work together on reforms that reflect our belief in welcoming everyone and treating all human beings with dignity and respect. Members of the coalition work together to advocate for just and equitable immigration policies, educate faith communities, and serve immigrant populations around the country.

Breaking Bread and Building Bridges (BBBB) is part of a larger strategy to make known faith communities voices at our local level through events such as potlucks, vigils, and detention visitations to connect with those most directly affected by unjust immigration policies. The goal of the BBBB is “to create and strengthen relationships of solidarity among people of faith, impacted communities, and immigrants’ rights groups to effectively organize and advocate for just immigration policies.” There is a resources toolkit available to congregations to assist in engaging in such activities, depending on the type of campaign the individual congregation wishes to create”.

Eat, meet, and organize for immigrants’ rights by forming a planning committee and meeting with leaders in the congregation and reaching out to other congregations and human rights groups inviting them to attend an event. At this event attendees can share family migration stories and listen to the stories of others, while identifying common values and goals. Strategies with action plans which make the most sense in your region and community can be mapped out for working towards immigrants’ rights. For example: working toward the passage of pro-immigrant bills like the DREAM Act.

It is never too late to organize in your congregation with other local faith groups in the campaign to strengthen the movement for just and humane immigration reform. There is much information available for your congregation on our UUA web site, and linking to Interfaith Immigration Coalition. On a personal note: I look forward to being with many of you in Louisville, KY at General Assembly, my last as your UUA Trustee. I can be reached at [jlund@uaa.org](mailto:jlund@uaa.org).

### **The Art of Promising: Rev. Kenn Hurto The Rev. Kenn Hurto, Lead Executive for the Southern Region**

"From Promise to Commitment"- 2013 UUA General Assembly Theme

Many Unitarian Universalist congregations are crafting so-called “Covenants of Right Relations” that attempt to articulate how — at our best — we most want to be with one another. This arises because in today’s multi-cultural world, it is often unclear what constitutes good behavior in groups. For instance:

- Among some people, looking another in the eye as you speak shows respect and trustworthiness; in other groups, to do so is impolite, even aggressively hostile.
- I come from the Midwest where raising your hand to speak at a group meeting is the “right” thing to do; elsewhere, that is seen as a silly encumbrance to the free exchange of ideas — interrupting, talking over one another is just fine; to me, that’s rude.

Those are comparatively easy illustrations. But what do we do when someone in our congregation behaves in ways that leave many emotionally unsafe — such as:

- Belligerently interrupting a sermon?
- Threatening members of the congregation with violence (yes, it happens)?
- Hugging that is, well, more than hugging?
- Gossiping maliciously or sending e-mail “flames?”

How do we stay in community honoring the dignity of each person when some inadvertently or even willfully cross a line into rudeness or a bullying posture? Are there no limits to our tolerance of “odd ducks,” as one member said to me?

A carefully crafted Covenant can help guide us during such times. My dear colleague, Eunice Benton, former Mid-South District Executive, calls these efforts an attempt to describe “good manners.” An effective covenant not only names what we can expect of each other, it also gives us permission and guidance when one person’s or group’s demands endanger the community.

The word covenant appears in English in the 14th century, derived from the Latin *convenire*, meaning to agree to come together. Thus, a covenant is simply an agreement, or promise to be together. It’s about our intentions and promises of how to be together. More nuanced meaning suggests that it is an unenforceable, but binding commitment to do or not do certain things together. The marriage vow, I promise my faithfulness, is the most familiar covenant. The bond of friendship is another. A covenant makes explicit what is normally implicit in a relationship.

Historically, this notion is central to the Free Church. We solemnly bind ourselves — not to agree and enforce a creed — but to be on a journey, seeking an ever better understanding of life’s truths while working for love and justice. A favorite covenant of mine comes from our congregation in Salem, MA (still using a modernized variant of this 1629 phrasing) which promises “to walke together in all God’s waies, according as he is pleased to reveale himself to us in his Bless word of truth.”

In Louisville, our UUA General Assembly will focus on From Promise to Commitment: “Promises call us into relationship. The experience of making, breaking and remaking promises is the reality of our lived faith. We will gather in Louisville to examine and renew our covenant to our faith, one another, our congregations and the larger world.”

Covenanting or promise making is easy to say but hard to live. We have yet much to learn. This is good work for us to do, for, as Dr. King said, “Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.”

Come to GA (details here: <http://www.uaa.org/ga/>) . Let’s get clear about the promises we make to one another in a beloved community. We will transform ourselves, our congregations, and possibly our world.

I’ll see you there. Kenn