

The UUCG Beacon

The beacon is published monthly by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greenville
252-355-6658
www.uugreenvillenc.org



President's Notes

As I'm sure many will realize, this is my swan song as president of your board of trustees. Much the way the departing Rev. Rod Thompson "handed over the keys" of the church to Rev. Rod Debs in his last expected sermon of his interim ministerial term, I will be handing

over the responsibilities of president to my successor, Rich Elkins. I have no doubt that he will handle this position as responsibly and effectively as he has previously.

As I leave the office, but continue on in the immediate past-president capacity on the board, I would like to take a few moments to reflect upon some of the many changes we have experienced during my term:

We have (successfully, I think) navigated the departure of our called minister, enjoyed the term of our interim minister, and prepared for the installation of our developmental minister. This has been a huge undercurrent of my term as president, and I am grateful for all who have helped meet the ministerial needs of this congregation.

We have suffered through the financial effects of a recession and are on the path to a more stable and robust financial status, as evidenced by the success of our recent pledge drive and adoption of a much less prohibitive budget than in recent past.

We have endured the changing face of our membership, with many beloved members passing on, moving away, or in other ways leaving, while we have enjoyed getting to know new friends and members (and even catching up with a few who have returned). All in all, our membership is up about 15% from the beginning of my term.

We have enjoyed many exciting changes to the building and physical space, including a remodeled exterior, and improved our YRE space utilization and storage.

We have navigated multiple changes in our programs and committees, both to address staffing changes and evolving needs.

As I look back upon my presidency, these are the things I am most proud of helping facilitate. But let's not forget, none of them could have happened without the loving kindness, generosity, dedication, forgiveness, understanding, and hard work of this congregation. Thank you to all who have helped to broaden my understanding of what a Blessed Community this really is.

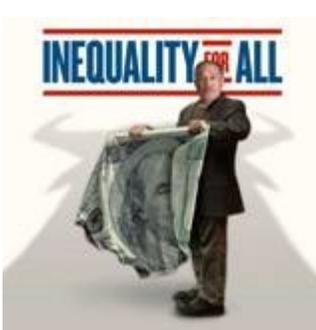
Tom Thielen
Former President, UUCG Board of Trustees

During this **summer season the worship services** will need to be a bit more fluid given the number of people involved in the coordination of the services. That being said advanced notices of the service topics will be sent through the weekly NUUS and cannot be included in the Beacon for this month. Sorry for the inconvenience. Let's make this summer awesome!

As summer approaches, **the Worship Committee** is looking for congregation members who want to lead services. We are looking for people to lead services on Sunday August 10th and Sunday August 31st. If you are interested in leading a service please contact Michael Betteken (ike4587@gmail.com) as soon as possible. The worship committee has presented two potential topics for the summer series which are "what inspires you" and "what I believe". Want to lead a service that doesn't fit in these two categories? Great! Let me know what I can do to make your dreams come true.

From the **Developmental Minister Task Force**—The Contract for Reverend Debs has been negotiated and signed. We are waiting to hear the result of the background check before any official announcement can be made. We will follow-up on the next *Beacon*.

The Ambiance Committee is delighted to exhibit art on our walls either created or owned by members of the congregation. We will host a celebrative, after-service event sometime in July.



**Inequality For All--Moral Movie Tuesday
July 29th 2014 at 7:00pm**

A passionate argument on behalf of the middle class, *Inequality for All* features Robert Reich, professor, best-selling author, and Clinton cabinet member - as he demonstrates how the widening income gap has a devastating impact on the American economy. The film is an intimate portrait of a man whose

lifelong goal remains protecting those who are unable to protect themselves. Through his singular perspective, Reich explains how the massive consolidation of wealth by a precious few threatens the viability of the American workforce and the foundation of democracy itself. In this *Inconvenient Truth* for the economy, Reich uses humor and a wide array of facts to explain how the issue of economic inequality affects each and every one of us.

Staff

Interim Minister: Rev. Rod Thompson
Music Director: Mort Stine
Choir Director: Sue Jefferson
RE Director: Lilani Butler Masters

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At-Large: Rich Elkins
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Committee Chairs

Ambiance: Terry Shank & Kay Alston
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Caring: Dorothea Handron
Communication: Rich Elkins
Endowment: Feryl Masters
Fellowship : Cam Scales
Finance:: Brenda Stewart
Fundraising: Feryl Masters & Claudia Sundman
Hospitality: open
Membership: Sue Foreman & Judi Hickson
Youth Religious Education: Jennifer Thielen
Stewardship: Patrice Alexander
Social Action: Pat Tesh & Pat Dix
Worship: Michael Betteken

Classic GLBT Movie Night—Friday July 18th at 7:00pm

UUCG's Classic GLBT Movie Nights are a free event open to the community and serve as an outreach to the local GLBT community in hopes of letting more people know that we are here and are a Welcoming Congregation if they may be in search of a spiritual home.

July's movie night will feature the British film "Beautiful Thing" (1996), the story of a teenager in a working-class area of southeast London who is coming to terms with his orientation and the feelings he has for one of his classmates, a neighbor, who comes to stay with them while dealing with family problems. July's will be July 18th, starting at 7pm with social and refreshments time. Previews start at 7:30 and the audience picks from a selection of trailers deciding which movie will be watch the next month. The movie starts immediately following.

Youth Religious Education

I remember our eldest child coming home from elementary school (how long ago that seems!) feeling rather upset because so many of her classmates would ask her where she went to church. It turned out that she didn't like having to admit she did not attend church because of the negative responses that seemed inevitable. Church, and for the children, Sunday School, are a big part of many people's lives here in the South. It is taken for granted that you will attend church, and if you let on that you don't attend, many people seem to assume that it means you just haven't found the RIGHT church and will start inviting you to attend THEIR church because they think it will be a great fit (under the assumption that most people believe similarly to themselves). In my experience they will extend that invitation repeatedly!

Those folks who extended those repeated invitations to our family were partially correct. We had not found the right church for us. While I liked the idea of having a community and a religious education program for my children to attend, but I wasn't willing to compromise what I believed or have my children taught lessons that ran quite contrary to our family's moral leanings. I didn't actually think that there was a church in existence that would be a fit for our family. Then we were introduced to the UUCG.

When our family first started attending UUCG regularly, the "Sunday School" classes for our children were one of the big motivating factors. I cannot over-emphasize how unique this congregation's liberal and open religious education program is in our little corner of the world, and how big of a blessing it can be to families that are looking for a spiritual home that welcomes both them and their children. As I step down from my tenure as Chair of our Youth Religious Education program, I would like to encourage the members of this congregation to continue to work on growing the program both in depth and breadth. Let others know that we are here - bring a friend! Welcome families and their children when they attend. Offer your time, support and talents to the program. If you have children in the program, help them attend regularly. Give us feedback on what works, or what doesn't work, for your family. The Youth Religious Education program is one of our greatest resources, and an area where we have much room for growth. Nurturing those things you wish to grow can be hard work (ask any gardener)! However, work that is shared can go much more smoothly, and together I think we can nurture a diverse and beautiful garden.

Jennifer Thielen

Outgoing Chair, Youth Religious Education

A lifelong unchurched man suddenly develops a vague religious urge and decides to join a church--any church. So he sets out to find one.

His first stop is a Roman Catholic church where he asks what he has to do to join. The priest mentions diligent study and the affirmation of the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds, then--just to see how much the man knows--asks him where Jesus was born. "Pittsburgh," he answers. "Get out!" cries the shocked priest.

Next stop is Southern Baptist where the seeker is told he would have to learn Bible verses, swear belief in the Nicene and Apostles' creeds, swear off booze, and be baptized ("By immersion, not just some sissy sprinklin"). The Baptist preacher then, to see how much this man knows, asks him where Jesus was born. "Philadelphia?" he asks tentatively (once bitten, twice shy). "Get out, you heathen!" yells the preacher.

Our perplexed protagonist finally walks into a Unitarian church where he is told all he has to do is sign a membership card. "You mean I don't have to renounce anything, swear to anything, or be dunked in anything?" "That's right. We have no special tests for membership, no dogma. We support total individual freedom of belief." "Then I'll join! But tell me--where was Jesus born?" "Why, Bethlehem, of course." The man's face lights up. "I knew it was some place in Pennsylvania!"

Deadline for next month's *Beacon* is Tuesday, July 22 at 8:00 pm

Unitarian Universalist
Congregation of Greenville
131 Oakmont Drive
Greenville, NC 27858
252-355-6658

