



The UUCG beacon

November 2007

The **beacon** is published monthly
by the Unitarian Universalist
Congregation of Greenville
252-355-6658
www.uugreenvillenc.org
beacon Editor: Don English
Email: beacon@uugreenvillenc.org

Sunday Services -- 10:30 am

November 4

Buddha's Four Noble Truths
Claudia Sundman

November 11

*Veterans Day: Fighting the
Good Fight*
Rev. Ann Marie Alderman

November 18

*Guest at Your Table Sunday:
Hospitality Takes Practice*
Rev. Ann Marie Alderman

November 25

*Justice, Equity and Compas-
sion: the second in a series of
sermons about the principles*
Rev. Ann Marie Alderman

Children's activities are available
each Sunday.

President's Notes:

Question: Does God exist? (true or false)

The headline in a new ad campaign by the UUA asks boldly: "Is God keeping you from going to church?" The ad continues: "Maybe you're uncomfortable with the idea of God – or at least someone else's idea of God..." I'm so glad they put it that way. I know that over my life, I've had varied opinions of God, and what or if it is.

Growing up going (by choice, not force) mostly to fundamentalist Christian churches, the idea of God that was instilled in me was one of an omni-everything force that was, of course, male. He gets credit for all the good stuff, but can never be blamed for the bad stuff. You need to believe this one particular way and be baptized (not as an infant, and you had to be dunked) or you're going to Hell.

As I grew older, I began to question. In school, I was the kid who would correct the teacher when she (it was usually a she) said something with which I disagreed, and I often got in trouble for it. But when it came to my theological questioning, I generally kept those inside. Any question was answered with a passage from the Bible, which was the ultimate authority, and could not be questioned.

I think my first qualm with this view of God was that He would be male. To me, assigning a gender to God was not something that made Him more omni-whatever... it was more of a limitation. So although I did what was expected of me, I really felt that God wasn't a He, or a She. God was an It.

The next issue that plagued me was the whole concept of salvation by adherence to theological doctrine. The best
(continued on page 4)

Reflections

REFLECTIONS . . . of Rev Ann Marie Alderman

“Let’s Talk Turkey!”

November is the time of year to give thanks. It is traditionally the time of year for feasting and celebrating whatever the harvest has yielded... For Americans the national Thanksgiving holiday recalls the story of the survival of the early European settlers who were welcomed and fed by the “native” inhabitants already long here on this continent who chose to be hospitable. Perhaps the real meaning of Thanksgiving is not so much about thankfulness for the harvest, but rather about choosing to be hospitable!

I am feeling very thankful for Greenville which I have lately found to be a friendly and hospitable place. Strangers don’t just say hello, they start complete conversations with me on a regular basis! Not only have my neighbors been welcoming and helpful, but so have shopkeepers and business owners and just about everyone I have encountered. I feel privileged to have been “engaged” so regularly and freely by folks who don’t know me at all, but who seem quite willing to act like they do!

Yet, I also remember that during the summer while trying to buy the house my partner and I most wanted, we were told that

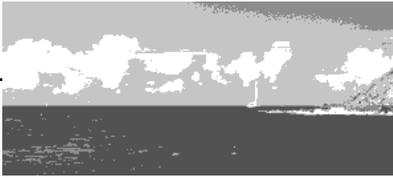
our bid, which was the highest of several, was being rejected...because the owners wanted to work with buyers who were native to Greenville!

I didn’t feel very thankful then. I felt frustrated; about not getting what I thought I wanted! For several hours, I felt unfairly rejected and angry. But, you know, there has been so much more cumulative time when I have been grateful for strangers who have chosen to extend hospitality to me, when they really didn’t have to. When I was a stranger that they could have feared, they chose instead to welcome me and openly accept whatever I was offering.

We never know just how powerful our choosing to be hospitable can be. We never know what rejection our hospitality might be balancing. So, here is my public thanks to Greenville for having performed a balancing act!

I will be giving thanks for all that I have this season, and choosing to be hospitable...as you and I both never know what rejection we might be balancing out!

--Ann Marie



On The Horizon

Report from UCONCI
October 20, 2007

The annual meeting of the Universalist Convention of North Carolina, Incorporated (UCONCI) was held on October 20, 2007 at Shelter Neck. As the Trustee from Greenville, I attended. I reported on activities at the UUCG and heard reports from other member Congregations.

The UCONCI is an association of local congregations primarily concerned with operating and maintaining the Shelter Neck facility. It was founded by area Universalist churches before the Universalist/Unitarian merger. After the merger, it continues, but any area UU Congregation can apply to be a member.

The Treasurer reported that total investments increased by about \$10,000 during the past year. The primary expense was \$10,000 for maintenance which included siding repair and painting and replacing the roof on the chapel. The Kinston Fund Trustees reported that it has grown to \$360,000, an increase of \$194,000 since inception. It will become available for use outside Lenoir County in 2011.

Rev. Ann Marie has invited MEG BARNHOUSE, nationally known UU singer and humorist, to perform for us on Friday night, **December 14th** at 8 pm. Tickets are \$10 per/person (special pricing available by calling Rev. Ann Marie). This is a rare opportunity for a congregation our size to be thoroughly entertained by a sister Carolinian, and a southern UU, often featured on the public radio show, "Radio Free Bubba"! Don't miss this night of laughter, story, song and down home insight. You will leave proud to be a UU!

--Rev Ann Marie Alderman

The Shelter Neck Facility use has increased with several member congregations using the facility for retreats and church events. Weekends are filling up for the 2008 season. Work is underway to add a camping area and meditation walk. Assistance is wanted in grant writing for a new building to provide more modern all year facilities.

The History of Universalism in North Carolina has been published and a copy was presented to the author, Peggy Rawheiser. All UU Congregations in North Carolina are to get a copy. Additional copies may be purchased.

The Convention agreed to suspend the By-laws and accept Chapel Hill Community Church, New Bern, and Swannanoa as members. I agreed to rewrite the Bylaws to make them more functional.

New officers were elected. Greenville now has an empty Trustee Position on the Board.
--Feryl Masters

(continued from page 1)

person, doing good all their life, but not accepting Jesus and God in a particular way was bound for eternal Hell, where even Adolph Hitler could have gone to Heaven, if he truly repented and went through the proper motions before dying. And to build on that idea, what about all the people in the world who were created and placed into life situations where they were going to become Hindus or Buddhists, or Muslims, because that was what their culture dictated. Was God not responsible for this? He/It created them that way, not to mention all of the non-Jews before Jesus. Back then, it was just the Jews, the chosen people, who even had a possibility of getting into Heaven. Or so they believe and would have you believe.

The Trinitarian concept was also one I never accepted from the beginning. It seemed to me to be convoluted and contrived, and couldn't be fully supported from a biblical standpoint. I remember one time sitting in the hallway of my dorm at college with some Christians, a Jew, and several Muslims talking about God. I already self-identified as Unitarian after reading about it, but never attending a service. When it came to the concept of the Trinity, the Christians, no matter how hard they tried, could not convince us (I sided with the Muslims and the Jew) that $1+1+1=1$. Our contention was that they weren't even true monotheists. Jesus could not be the Son of God and be God at the same time. Moreover, why there also needed to be a Holy Spirit that was part of God in the first place was a puzzle.

Upon taking classes in Comparative Religion and Anthropology in college, I started to question my belief in God's existence at all. If the Hebrews had once been polytheists, then the whole Judeo-Christian concept of one God was questionable. It became more evident to me that God was created in man's image, rather than the other way around. I began to consider myself agnostic, that maybe there was no answer to the question of God's existence, and being comfortable with the unknown.

For many years I considered myself, and then became active as a UU, more specifically a Humanist or Agnostic UU. I was uncomfortable with even using the term God, Goddess, or the plurals of either, in church. I didn't like hymns which referenced God, because they affirmed what to me was a superstition. I also did not consider myself to be "spiritual", and was not attracted to that idea, but yet something still seemed missing. My reason for being a UU was really the humanist ideal, but seemed lacking somehow.

My humanist ideas explained people, but still felt disconnected from the whole web of life concept. My spiritual practice felt dry and un-inspired. I decided that I needed a greater connection to nature, so I joined the Earth-Based Spirituality Covenant Group when it started several years ago. We had a very diverse group of people involved that ranged from people with feelings like me to those with fully polytheistic pagan beliefs, including magic. (Although I came to understand magic as really more of a focusing of energy similar (continued on page 5)

Working Together to Build Community



(continued from page 4)

to prayer, just with more props, and without guaranteed results.)

While I continued my distaste for concepts of categorized and anthropomorphized deities, the concepts of connectedness to the Earth were very appealing. The celebration of the Sabbats, tied to the phases of the year, the solstices and equinoxes, and the midpoints in-between made a lot of sense, and help to focus on the Earth and its cycles. The calling of the quarters (cardinal directions) and their significance was very relevant to the Geographer in me, although I would have rearranged the association of the elements of earth, air, fire, and water differently than the traditions presented. The study of various pantheons of deities further reinforced the concept of man creating God(s).

I'm not exactly sure how it came about, but one month in the EBSCG, we talked about a form of belief called "pantheism." I've since heard some differing terms to de-

scribe it, and pantheism used to describe other ideas, but the concept as presented was that "God is nature." Everything around us, including ourselves comprise God. More specifically, there was a belief called "scientific pantheism" that rejected the supernatural and magic. Finally I had found a spiritual practice that did not come into conflict with rationalism.

This concept, whether it be appropriately named or not, was further reinforced by the presentation "Thank God for Evolution" presented here not long ago by Michael Dowd. Not only is nature God, but the whole Universe is God. It just makes sense to me. I have since been able to reclaim the concept of God and am more comfortable with the use of the word, because God for me is how I define it, not how someone tells me that I have to define it. Do I believe in God? Well, that really depends on your definition. I'm still comfortable with the question not having an answer, especially not a true/false one.

--Rich Elkins

"FUND"ER FROLICS II

Our Second Annual "Fund"er Frolics Auction will take place on **December 1st**. This time we will be inviting the public, so we need lots of services offered. Ann Marie told us about a very successful auction at a congregation in Florida. They had many people (from the public) who would attend every year just to try to get the various sorts of dinners that people offered. Dinners have always been popular with us also, so maybe this year we can have more dinners offered. Lee and I really enjoyed the romantic dinner for two that Lee purchased at the last auction for our anniversary! In addition to ethnic, gourmet, vegetarian, etc., I think some picnics would be nice. Be creative! Roger Robbin's nature hikes were popular, as were the Patterson's game nights. The coastal adventures are always popular also. People also really like pampering. Karen Day once offered an afternoon of girl stuff (facials and manicures) that about 12 of us purchased. It was lovely. Don't forget the silent auction. Artwork always sells, and we have many wonderful artists amongst us! Just remember that it's not a yard sale. The donation forms are ready, and there is a list of donation ideas on the back.

--Jackie Wyman



WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS MONTH

November 2007 in PREVIEW

S M T W T F S

Contacting Rev. Ann Marie Alderman:
 cell phone: 252-414-4076,
 e-mail: minister@uugreenvillenc.org.
 Office hours: Tues 11:30-1:30 & Wed 5-7 pm.
 Other times by appointment.

1	2	3
		Game Night
4	5	6
9:30 Forum 10:30 Buddha's Four Noble Truths		8:30 Breakfast @ K & W Cafeteria 7:00 Universal Health Care
		7
		8
		9
		10
		9:00 Bldg & Grnds  6:00 Dinner's for 8
11	12	13
9:30 Forum 10:30 Fighting the Good Fight Veterans Day	7:00 Board Mtg	8:30 Breakfast @ K & W Cafeteria
		14
		15
		16
		17
		9:00 First Born Continue: Ministe- rial Start-up Retreat For UUCG Leader- ship
18	19	20
9:30 Forum 10:30 Hospitality Takes Practice		8:30 Breakfast @ K & W Cafeteria
		21
		22
		23
		24
		25
		26
		27
		28
		29
		30
		Thanksgiving
25	26	27
9:30 Forum 10:30 Justice, Eq- uity & Compassion 7:00 Interfaith Thanksgiving Svc @ 1st Presb	7:00 Book Club	8:30 Breakfast @ K & W Cafeteria
		28
		29
		30
		Longhorn Steak- house

News, Notes and Other Stuff

GREETERS & GREETING

Every Sunday we like to have two people signed up to greet the congregation as they enter the building, hand out the Orders of Service, and direct newcomers to the sign in book. In addition, the greeters make a special effort to make the newcomers (and everyone else for that matter) feel welcome.

Other duties include putting out hymnals, taking up the collection, and counting the number of persons present. There is an instruction sheet and a sign up sheet on the bulletin board. If you would like to assist in performing this valuable service, please sign up on the sign up sheet or, contact Bill Paulson (252/975-2173) for more information

--Bill Paulson

FIRST BORN FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Please join us at First Born Holy Church on **Saturday, November 17th**, to assist with the food distribution. This will be the "Thanksgiving" distribution. There are more people getting food than usual and more help is needed to distribute the food. There are so many people that parking is required across the street from the church. Our congregation has promised to have at least 9 workers for this distribution. If more can help, that would be great. Please arrive by 8:30am to receive your assignments. The distribution begins at 9:00am until 12:00pm. We distribute food packages, help with administrative work, pack food boxes and carry food boxes to cars. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes. The work is "work".

UUCG collects plastic grocery bags for First Born. There is a large plastic, blue container in the library for the bags. I deliver the bags to First Born each month. The bags must be clean, dry and odor free. Please do not bring plastic bags with RED letters. If you have food items, non-perishable, you can leave them in the library as well. I will deliver the food to First Born when I deliver the bags.

If you can provide a ride for other UUCG members please let me know. If you need directions, please contact me at 252-916-5069 or email toniebritt@clis.com.

--Toni Britt Tyer

Interfaith Alliance

Interfaith Alliance is sponsoring the sixth annual Thanksgiving Service, Sunday, **November 18**, 4 pm. This service will be full of representatives from the abundant diversity of faith communities in Greenville! Bring a can of food as an offering and plan to stay afterwards for fellowship. All UUCG members and friends who plan to attend, are also being asked to bring a snack to share during the fellowship time. UUCG and individual members of UUCG have long been supporters of the Interfaith Alliance. Rev. Ann Marie is coordinating this special service. Please come and show your support! The Interfaith Thanksgiving Service will be held at First Presbyterian Church at the corner of 14th Street and Elm Street.

--Rev Ann Marie Alderman

From the Denominational Affairs Committee

The fires currently sweeping across southern California have affected Unitarian Universalists (UUs) in many communities. In response to this disaster, the Pacific Southwest District (PSWD) of the UUA has begun the PSWD Fire Relief Fund. A district committee will disburse all funds collected to UU congregations, UUs in need, community groups in relationship with UU congregations, and other groups supporting those most in need.

District Executive Ken Brown notes, "As we have found in the past, insurance does not cover such devastation and it can take years for those affected to recover." Donations to the PSWD Fire Relief Fund are being accepted online at <http://tinyurl.com/ytfz3f>. If you wish to contribute by mail, please send funds to:

Pacific Southwest District
Fire Relief Fund
2052 Norma Street
Oxnard, CA 93036.

More California Fire Update

The PSWD website <http://www.pswd.uua.org> is being regularly updated to reflect breaking news.

On a personal note, Betty and I are still in our home, although dealing with the 50+ mph Santa Ana winds and 90-degree temperatures, and occasional thick smoke. The Malibu fire is 12 miles west of us; the NightSky fire was about 2 miles northeast and the Magic fire about 11 miles east. We know we are fortunate not to be living in a shelter, as so many others are.

In service,
-- Tom Stapleford
President, Pacific Southwest District

Ministerial Start-Up Weekend

November 16-17 is the time for our Ministerial Start-Up Retreat. The retreat will be facilitated by Thomas Jefferson District Executive, Annette Marquis. Events on Friday evening are for the entire congregation, and will kick off with a pot-luck dinner at 6pm, and childcare will be provided for that portion of the retreat. Events on Saturday are for the Minister, Board, Committee on Ministry, and Program Council. For the pot-luck bring please bring your food ready to serve---that is, already carved, cut up, or whatever---so that it is ready to go when it's time to eat

A Start-Up event is very commonly part of UU transitions and new beginnings for staff. It is customarily intended to set mutual expectations for a new Minister, the congregation, and the congregation's board and other leaders. The process may involve discussions and prioritization of perceived needs and wishes, formal goal-setting, creation of and commitment to a covenant, and various activities to get to know one another better. There is an outside facilitator who serves to bring all parties into the process and to elicit their participation and their support of the covenant or other agreement.

Please make all efforts to join us in this important event.

Religious Education Schedule Nov 2007

	Teens	Tweens	Adult
Friday, Nov 2			Course in Miracles 7:00 pm
Sunday, Nov 4	Teen RE Noon	Time Travelers During the service	Forum 9:30 am-10:15 pm
Friday, Nov 9			Course in Miracles 7:00 pm
Saturday, Nov 10	Teen Night 7:00 pm		
Sunday, Nov 11	Teen RE Noon	Time Travelers During the service	Forum 9:30 am – 10:15 am
Friday, Nov 16			Course in Miracles 7:00 pm
Sunday Nov 18	Yoga During the service		Forum 9:30 am – 10:15 am
Sunday Nov 25	Teen RE Noon	Time Travelers During the service	Forum 9:30 am – 10:15 am
Friday, Nov 30			Course in Miracles 7:00 pm

--Victoria Brown

Notes From the Board 10/15/2007

The Treasurer reported that last month's report was incorrect regarding the rate of pledge contributions versus expectations. We are actually running behind. Our original 2007-08 budget is unbalanced with the expectation that the shortfall would be made up from savings. The Board directed the Treasurer to cash out one of the three Building Fund CDs in order to meet the Congregation's budgeted expenses for upcoming quarter. The quotes for Congregational Insurance were reviewed and the Board authorized the Treasurer to purchase the required workers compensation and general liability coverage. Any monies not spent on expenses will be placed in a reserve fund. Bill Paulson is currently researching the history and purpose of UUCG's endowment fund. The Board authorized the Treasurer to reimburse Rich Elkins for the purchase of the stole that was given to Frieda Gillespie in thanks for her service to UUCG as 2006-2007 Interim Minister.

The Program Council met on October 11th. Ruel Tyer, as Chair of Buildings and Grounds, has been asked by the Board to get three estimates for the proposed front entrance handicapped ramp. The Board adopted the new building reservation member form and has asked the Building and Grounds Committee to establish a curfew and list of expectations that must be adhered to when the building is used.

The Friday Night Potluck on **November 16th**, as part of the Ministerial Start Up Retreat weekend, will be open to all UUCG members and friends. Childcare will be provided. The Ministerial Installation has been scheduled for February 3rd. The projected installation cost is \$200.

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be **November 19th** at 7:00pm.

--Patrice Alexander

RE Committee

Fall is shaping up to be a very busy season for RE. We had a healthy contingent participating in the CROP Hunger Walk. The teens performed a skit for the congregation beforehand to illustrate why they wanted to take a stand against hunger and walk together at the local CROP Walk.

Our trip to the Corn Maze on October 20th was a blast. We had about fifteen children and a handful of adults participating. Some groups sped through the maze collecting all the token punches as fast as they could; other groups took a more leisurely pace to collect the punches; for some of us the punches were not important and we were happy just to find the exit.

On the last Saturday in October, we are having a Halloween Carnival with games, treats, and a haunted house designed by the teens. The teens take particular delight in their contribution to the Halloween festivities and if it is anything like last year's haunted house, everyone is sure to get a good fright.

The next Games Night is Saturday, November 3rd. We all enjoy playing games and this is a good opportunity for members of different ages to interact and get to know one another.

As you can see, our calendar is full of fun activities. Hopefully, we will catch our breath before the holiday season begins. Nothing in RE is possible without the volunteers and we appreciate every moment they contribute.

--Pattie Gade



UU Wednesday Dining Out Menu*



Nov 7 -- **Dale's Indian Restaurant** -- 419 Evans Street -- 551-3253

Nov 14 -- **Carolina Pasta Works** -- 2422 Stanton Squ -- 757-7756

Nov 21 -- No Eating Out

Nov 28 -- **Long Horn** -- 520 SE Greenville Blvd -- 830-6100

Let's Eat!

* Wednesday dining out starts at 6:00 pm & is Dutch treat. Please let Sylvia English know if you plan to come so that an appropriate number of places can be made available at the restaurant.

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

Minister, Rev Ann Marie Alderman
Religious Education Dir, Victoria Brown
President, Rich Elkins
Vice President, Feryl Masters
Secretary, Patrice Alexander
Treasurer, Claudia Sundman
Office Administrator, Jess Patterson

Committee Chairs
Building and Grounds: Ruel Tyer
Endowment: Bill Paulson
Finance: Paul Alston
Hospitality: Gail Butler & Marcia Fletcher
Membership: Feryl Masters (acting)
Religious Education: Patty Gade
Social Action: Marta Dominguez
Worship: Bruce Maxwell

