

Staff Report for Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater  
Dr. David Katz, Music Director

When I was hired as music director of the Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater this past August, 2009 I had a few very specific goals in mind: 1) to improve the overall quality of the music program, 2) to make the music program a more integral part of the overall worship experience and church life, 3) to establish a children's choir 4) to provide outreach in order to attract more than just our immediate community.

Regarding the overall quality of the music program, I would say the quality has certainly improved between when I was hired in August, 2009 and when I write this report in April, 2009. As a professional musician I would say that the quality of the adult chorale has improved in terms of their overall musicianship and vocal sound as well as the level of musical sophistication they bring to what they approach. For the congregant who listens to the choir on Sunday morning, this can translate to a more moving and profoundly spiritual experience.

Instrumental music was beautifully presented and provided a diverse experience of repertoire and styles to meet the needs of our diverse congregation. Linda Jones consistently provided the highest quality music on a weekly basis. Many of our congregants also provided beautiful instrumental music including Pat McGiverin, Debbie Langrock, Barry Skeete, Cathy Costa, Van Fenstermaker, Linda Carroll, and Peter Goldhammer. Friends of UU Clearwater such as Marcella Ramsey, Dr. Ron Bowers and Kay Clark also gave generously of their time and resources in order to make our Sunday morning services a moving experience. I am grateful to everybody's donation of time and talent in order to elevate our worship. Doing all-music Sunday worship experiences featured many of these talents in order to allow us to think of how we worship in unique ways. The program focusing on the religious and personal life of Francis Poulenc is an example of this. The December holiday program with its theme of light allowed us to celebrate the common threads that bring the many faiths we celebrate as Unitarian Universalists together.

A number of things were instituted and/or continued in order to make the music program a more integral part of the overall worship experience. From an educational viewpoint, I took pride in writing a monthly column in the Octagram in order for people to understand what goes into the musical life of a church. The column also allowed me to express gratitude for the things that Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater has accomplished and to challenge Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater regarding those things we still have yet to achieve.

Having members of the choir lead the congregation in our weekly hymns allowed a greater connection between the smaller choir covenant and larger congregational covenant. Monthly music committee meetings consistently involve discussions of how music can become more connected with the overall Sunday worship experiences. Staff retreats as well as smaller monthly meetings with Rev. Janamanchi and Rev. Welch further allow for collaborating and ensuring that a cohesive worship experience will take place.

One of the wishes of a number of the congregants has been to start a children's choir. Children's choir began on Sunday mornings this past October, 2009. Children in grades K-8 may participate in children's choir. The children perform about every 4-6 weeks. Some important dates that children's choir performed for this past year were the December music program, Christmas Eve and Stewardship Sunday. The kids are singing beautifully and look smart with their brand new stoles. The adult chorale was so envious of the children's stoles that we are in the process of having stoles made for them as well!

In order to attract members from the larger community, we had a monthly concert during the months that our snowbirds were most present. January featured a concert by famed UU composer Jim Scott performing his own works in the Octagon Arts Center. February featured a beautiful concert by pianist Dr. Judith Alstadter who performed a varied concert including an interesting section of ragtime pieces by women composers. Marcella Ramsey returned in March with our own Linda Jones to perform a moving program of cello works. April was rounded out by a jazz concert given by Cathy Costa and assisted by percussionist Barry Skeete and pianist Norman Thalmeier.

As I write this I look forward to another great year at Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater. I look forward to my summer professional development plans where I will get to attend the General Assembly in Minneapolis in June. I look forward to seeing one of our youths, Yashasvi Janamanchi, sing at General Assembly in the UU Children's Choir. Yashasvi was chosen on a competitive basis to participate in this wonderful ensemble. In July, I look forward to attending the Head's House of Music Choral Panorama in Orlando in order to learn about the newest published choral literature.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you. Respectfully submitted, Dr. David Katz