

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CONGREGATION**  
**Rev. Abhi Janamanchi, Senior Minister**  
**May 2, 2010**

**CONGREGATIONALLY SPEAKING**

It's been another busy and wonderful year. I feel privileged and proud to be serving this congregation which has continued its commitment to be a vibrant, prophetic, and caring religious community.

We added new staff this year – **Rev. Bill Welch**, our interim consulting minister, **Dr. David Katz**, our music director, **Karen Roeder**, our office administrator/book-keeper, and **Rev. Nick Ozuna**, our intern minister. My sincere thanks to them, **Christine Pensa**, our RE assistant, **Linda Jones**, our accompanist, and **Janine Tompkins**, our maintenance manager, for enabling the smooth functioning of church programs and activities. The staff has done an outstanding job dealing with a busy and growing institution at a time of transition and financial challenge.

I would be remiss if I didn't pause to thank the incredibly hard working and competent **lay leaders** of our congregation: **Sue Boone**, our President, the Executive committee, the Board of Trustees, and so many other volunteer leaders who really make this place hum.

I have said before that much of our ministry is expressed beneath the forms. It is within the rhythms of worship, the visits of counseling and support, the classes, the potlucks, the picnics, the phone calls, the music, and the fund raisers, that so much of gracious power happens which, in turn, transforms us into a living, vibrant, caring community. Along with those patterns this report will identify some of the special elements in the past year.

**Congregational highlights of this year (my eleventh among you) include:**

- Higher attendance at **worship**; inspiring and moving services, particularly those led by youth, worship associates, and member testimonials.
- Incredible **music** in Sunday services provided by the adult chorale, Linda Jones, and talented UUC musicians and especially, the addition of a **children's choir** that continues to grow and flourish under the direction of Dr. David Katz; inspiring **music concerts** provided by UUC members and friends.
- Lively **children's and youth religious education** that experienced a growth spurt this year under the leadership of Rev. Bill Welch, Christine Pensa, and our dedicated teachers.
- Supporting the **half-time internship** of Nick Ozuna and the creation of a Tampa bay branch of the Risho Kosei-kai, a Japanese Buddhist organization.
- Having the first-ever **congregational retreat** in March attended by 70 adults and children.
- Highly successful performances of the **Vagina Monologues** by UUC Women (3 to-date and more to follow).
- Reviving the **Haunted House and Day of the Dead** celebration under the leadership of Cassie Alderman that brought together UUC youth, adults, and the outside community.
- Hosting the **IARF (International Association of Religious Freedom) conference** in January that featured Rev. Bill Schulz, Dr. Paul Rasor, Dr. Hal French and others.
- Hosting a **multi-faith, multi-cultural concert** to commemorate Dr. King's birthday attended by nearly 300 people from around the Tampa Bay.
- Raising more than \$7700 towards **Haiti earthquake relief**.
- Organizing a press conference for **health-care reform** in September and a Standing on the Side of Love service to commemorate **National Coming Out Day** in October.

- Participating in rallies with the **Coalition of Immokalee Workers'** to get Publix supermarkets to provide fair wages for tomato pickers and hosting the Slavery museum.
- Generous support of outside organizations and causes through the monthly **Share-The-Plate**, the **Mitten Tree**, **RCS Food Drive**, **blankets for farm workers**, and **Sponsor-A-Khasi Hills Student** programs .
- A successful **annual auction** (Green Fest 2010), book sale, and after-service lunches organized by the Ways & Means and RE committees.
- Creating a **long-range planning committee** to help develop a strategic plan for the future.
- A **Focus Group** process in December that led to improved communication from the board on financial and congregational matters and active consideration of making capital improvements to the social hall and the octagon.
- A successful spring **Stewardship Drive** spearheaded by Owen Thompson and Bill Snell, characterized by both the human touch and good organization.
- Creation of a **pastoral associates program** to enhance UUC's pastoral ministry.

We need to hold up proudly all these accomplishments.

Much of the work of the church is carried out by committed laypersons. Thanks are due to all our outgoing committee members, officers, and chairpersons, as well as to those who will be staying on.

## THE MINISTER'S YEAR IN BRIEF

### WORSHIP

As of writing this report, I prepared and led **31 worship services** at UUC including Christmas Eve; five of them were shared presentations and three were as worship leader when someone else was the primary speaker (Michael Schuler, Bill Schulz, Roberta Finkelstein). I preached at **other UU churches** in Sarasota, Lakeland, Gainesville (pulpit exchange), Cherry Hill, NJ (installation sermon), Lecanto, and also at the Unity church in Clearwater. For the remainder of the church year, I am scheduled to be in the pulpit on May 9, 16, 23, June 6, 13, & 20.

Our **worship associates** continued to do an exceptional job this year. I am grateful to Dotti Doyle, Sue Boone, Jenn Bouchie, Marty Pelham, Greg Byrd, and Abhimanyu Janamanchi for sharing their spiritual gifts and talents and enhancing the worship experience.

### ADULT EDUCATION

In December, I led a discussion group on the book '**Unplug the Christmas Machine.**' In February, I led a three-week seminar on **Money Matters**. Bill Welch and I co-led monthly seminars on Unitarian Universalism (**UU101**) for our guests. I was also involved in preparing and presenting the '**Pathways to Membership**' class twice this year.

### rites of passage

**In Memoriam** - Betty Upson Schmitz, Fritzie Redmond, Bill Tanney (UUC friend), and Libby Feirich. I also officiated at a memorial service for a non-member.

**Weddings** - One member (Lisa Meyers & Amanda Patanow) and five non-member weddings.

**Child dedication** - Aidan Mazarolo

### PASTORAL CARE

I averaged around 10 pastoral appointments/calls/home and hospital visits per month. The cares & concerns committee led by **Jackie Brown** continues to provide wonderful care and support to members in need.

## **COVENANT GROUPS**

I am not directly involved in covenant groups, but they are extremely important, giving both old and new people places to be with a small group, discussing matters of worth. I hope this program continues to grow. I am deeply grateful to **Tiffany Boggs**, covenant group coordinator, and the facilitators for their dedication and leadership.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

I worked with the **Board, Executive committee, Administrative committee, Stewardship, Finance, Auction, Social Justice, Sunday Services, and Committee on Ministry** to address and meet congregational issues and needs. I also met with lay leaders to discuss congregational issues. I served as an ex-officio member of the **Interim Consulting Minister, the Music Director, and Office Administrator Search Committees** and helped them develop job descriptions, and participated in the interview process.

I convened monthly **Staff** meetings and met with individual staff regularly to facilitate smooth functioning of programs and activities. I provided written evaluations for the office administrator and music director.

What takes up the biggest chunk of meeting time is ad hoc meetings on many and varied subjects.

## **BUILDINGS & GROUNDS**

We are investing in our building to assure its well-being for many years into the future. **Bill Newton, John Chase, Janine Tompkins**, and a trusted group of volunteers have done an outstanding job of maintaining the property, installing a new phone system, purchasing a new copier, laying new floors, cleaning the pond, and painting the outer walls of the Octagon. We are doing work neglected by years of scarce resources and we are planning for regular, efficient care of the facilities for the future. I am grateful to work, worship, study, and serve in such an elegant facility.

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

I organized an **interfaith worship service** and a multi-faith concert for the IARF conference in January. I delivered prayers at a **peace-pole dedication** ceremony at Congregation Beth Shalom, an **international peace day** event in New Port Richey, and the **annual interfaith thanksgiving service** at Unity. I spoke to **middle school students** at Safety Harbor Middle, offered an invocation at a **Pinellas County Commissioners** meeting, led a marriage workshop for the **Ismaili Muslim** community, and spoke at a **Rotary Meeting** in Largo.

I received the Pinellas County ACLU's **Gardner Beckett Friend of Civil Liberties Award** in December.

## **DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS**

It was an honor to be the **Sunday morning preacher** at the UUA General Assembly in Salt Lake City. I will be attending the **General Assembly in Minneapolis** this year and will be co-leading the CLF worship service. I served on the **Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF)** board and the Holdeen India program board. I continue to be a member of the **UUA President's International Advisory Council** and the **Multicultural Ministry** Advisory Group. I helped organize the **annual cluster renewal service** and coordinate the visit of **Rev. Peter Morales**, UUA President.

UUC continues to be an **Honor Society** in its giving to the UUA and Florida District, and a **James Luther Adams Award** and Creating Justice banner recipient in its support of the UU Service Committee. We also support and assist needy local persons with proceeds from the **Better World Fund**.

## IN CONCLUSION

I continue to see my strengths as leading worship, with an emphasis on preaching; teaching, which I don't do enough of; pastoring, particularly one-on-one spiritual counseling; witnessing for justice; serving as cheer leader, coach, challenger, supporter, nudger, idea contributor, whatever it takes to help the staff and lay leadership find their ministries and callings within the church; holding the vision of Beloved Community, during good times and hard times; keeping a figurative finger on the pulse of this organization, helping find what needs to be done at a given time; and calling us, ever and always, to our best selves as individuals and as a spiritual community.

We are a fallible human, religious community, engaged in the holy work of building a beloved community of hope, love, and service. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., among numerous others, spoke often and eloquently about the 'Beloved Community.' This profound spiritual concept was not a utopian vision of perfect people in a perfect world. No, it was about real people, with real faults and imperfections, covenanting together to be in right relationship, to keep talking, keep forgiving, keep loving, and keep working to bring more compassion and justice into the world.

As we end one church year and begin another, I would have you feeling good about the many, tangible ways in which we are doing church RIGHT. But I hope we will continue our efforts to deepen our connections and relationships with each other, develop and enhance congregational structures to fit the needs of our community, and work on becoming a stronger and healthier religious community.

May we, as a community, feel both contentment for what we have accomplished and spiritual restlessness for all that we will yet be called to be and do for each other and the larger community.

I encourage you to continue to bring your concerns and hopes for our church and its ministry to me, or to speak to a member of the Committee on Ministry.

And thank you to all of you for your support, encouragement, helpful criticisms, and well wishes, but most of all for your commitment to UUC. It is an honor to serve as your senior minister!

Respectfully submitted,

*Abhi Janamanchi*