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*Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice, to  
undo the thongs of the yoke, to  
let the oppressed go free, and to  
break every yoke? Is it not to  
share your bread with the hungry,  
and bring the homeless poor into  
your house; when you see the  
naked, to cover them, and not to  
hide yourself from your own kin?*

Isaiah 58:6-7

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*The woman said to him, "Sir, I  
see that you are a prophet. Our  
ancestors worshiped on this  
mountain, but you say that the  
place where people must worship  
is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to  
her, "Woman, believe me, the  
hour is coming when you will  
worship the Father neither on this  
mountain nor in Jerusalem. You  
worship what you do not know;  
we worship what we know, for  
salvation is from the Jews. But  
the hour is coming, and is now  
here, when the true worshipers  
will worship the Father in spirit  
and truth, for the Father seeks  
such as these to worship him.  
God is spirit, and those who  
worship him must worship in  
spirit and truth."*

John 4:19 - 24

GN .pdf Version (387KB)

## GOOD NEWS JAN/FEB 2009

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### "The Fulfillment: The next stage of Christianity might surprise you, Part One" By Rev. Tom Schade

One hundred years ago, the facts of evolution, the facts of science, the learnings of historical research into the origins of the Bible and how it was written: these were all immovable facts that some people could not see, would not see, even though they were right before their eyes. There are still some people with that particular blindness today, but my question this morning is this: What are the immovable facts about the state of religion that are before our eyes today, that most people will not see, that we ourselves have trouble seeing? One, Organized religion, as the Western world had known it for thousands of years, is dying a painful and convulsive death. And Two, The religious impulse is being reborn, resurrected, in entirely new circumstances and arrangements. Many people do not have the impression that organized Western religions are dying. We see, instead, the power of fundamentalism in both Christianity and Islam, and while fundamentalism Judaism seems remote to us, if we lived in Israel, it would not. In fact, the world today is being shaped by conflicts between fundamentalist religions. We have the sneaky feeling that, even at the highest levels of our government, in the Oval Office, itself, that people there see the conflict in the Middle East as a religious war, between Christians and Muslims, a conflict that as it gets worse only brings the day of Christ's return closer. And on the other side, we are all being very persistently educated in the power of Islamic fundamentalism, as a religious point of view, and the political lessons Muslims draw from it.

But we must raise our sights a little higher and remember that all of these forms of fundamentalisms are, in fact, in reaction to, and in opposition to, a much broader movement toward secularism, modernity and what in 1910 was called the New Theology. We are able to see that Christian fundamentalism is a defense against a modernizing and secularizing culture. And we see that a particular strain of Jewish fundamentalism has developed in Israel, long a secularized society. And while I have less knowledge about the world of Islam, I cannot help but think that the Western secularism seems so threatening to the Islamic fundamentalists because there are portions of their population which are attracted to it.

So, if we are to raise our vision a little higher we might want to say that the religious world is a conflict between secularism and religion, especially fundamentalist religions.

This is the conventional wisdom of the day.

I do not think that it is the whole story. I think that we are missing something right before our eyes. And so, I want to stick my neck way out now and say this: **Secularism is not the enemy of Christianity; it is the natural outgrowth and fullest realization of Christianity.** I agree with a few theologians and thinkers who are now saying that Western religion is evolving into secularism. Secular society is the culmination of some of the most crucial themes of the Western religions.

The western religions have a direction in their movement. It actually has many directions, because like everything in history, it goes this way and then that way and circles back on itself, but it does have direction. But you can sum up the direction of western religion with these movements.

- **God goes from "out there", to "in here". Think about it – at the beginning of the story, God is out there, the creator of all the Earth, and then he comes down to Earth as Jesus, and he is killed and resurrected, and enters the body of believers as the Holy Spirit. From out there to in here.**
- **God starts out talking to the patriarchs, and then to Kings, and then to disreputable prophets, and then comes as a carpenter, who is executed as a criminal and one of the last times people see the risen Jesus, they think him an ordinary man, a fellow traveler, walking with them to Emmaus.**
- **Worship goes from rituals in the Temple, to worshipping in truth and spirit.**
- **Our sacred duties go from sacrifices at the altar to ethical living and justice-making.**
- **God's favor goes from those He chooses, to all of humanity, especially those who are suffering.**

I ask you to look at the reading from Isaiah (sidebar). This passage is, time wise, from about the middle of the Old Testament, from the 6th or 7th century before the common era. The oldest parts of the Old Testament were written 4 or 5 centuries earlier, the newest parts were about the same time frame after it. And Isaiah is talking about how God does not interested in the sacrifices made at the Temple, but instead wants people to behave more ethically. What Isaiah reflects is a movement of religion, from outward ritual toward the inward, toward the personal and toward the ethical.

Look at the reading from John 4 in the sidebar. Jesus, speaking to a Samaritan woman, a people who worshipped the same God but differed from the ancient Jews about the role of the Temple and Jerusalem, takes it all the way. "The hour is



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Please know that the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship is here to support and nurture your faith development. I see the work of the UUCF as helping one another develop a deeper relationship with God and with Christ.

...don't forget to pray. Jesus said: . . . and pray for those who persecute you" Prayer has helped me to see how I have been part of the dynamic. Prayer has softened my heart towards those who were initially wary or even hostile to my Christian faith. Prayer has helped me to understand and by so doing, in turn, have been understood.

coming and is now here when the true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. God is spirit and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth." One can read this passage as calling for the end of organized religion and the direct individual encounter with God, in spirit and in truth, inward, personal and ethical. I believe that when this movement toward the personal, toward inward, toward religion as lived reality and not a belief structure, toward ordinary people and away from power is fulfilled, what emerges is a secular society. Western Religion, over the course of its history, places more and more emphasis on each individual holding the religious truth in their innermost hearts. And if the test of religion is whether a person sincerely holds those values in his or her heart, then does it not follow that each person must have the freedom of conscience. And does it not follow that the state first, and then the church must ask no more than voluntary compliance with religious rules? And does that not lead ultimately to a secular society? The whole thrust of Western religion, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic, is that each of us must freely choose God, in our own hearts, and if we are to freely choose, then we must be free to choose, which must also mean that we must be free to not choose.

Christendom is replaced by a secular society. And Religion, organized religion that is powerful social institution, is replaced by personal spirituality. So everywhere you go, people say, "I am not religious, but I am spiritual." What do we mean by a secular society? I think that it more than a society which is legally secular – one that practices separation of church and state. There is an ideological component to secularism as well. The cultural hegemony of religion as a set of beliefs has been broken. People understand their lives according to their own standards and schemes; there is not an overarching religious understanding which defines normalcy and reality for everyone. The focus of people's lives are in the here and now, the practical details of their own happiness and success – their ethical and moral standards are derived from their own reflection and common sense.

Where a person fits into the great cosmos, the multitude of other people, the planet and all our fellow travelers on it, how one relates to the possibilities of one's own mistakes, errors and sins – in a secular society, these questions are inward questions, they are personal questions and they are ethical questions. These are understood by ordinary persons to be spiritual questions. The accumulated wisdom of the world's religions are a resource for the exploration, but religion itself is not authoritative. The people do not recognize external authorities, because the final authority for each person's spiritual quest is internal, inward, and personal.

I do believe that the great prophets and religious teachers of all the ages have wanted this for us, the ordinary people of the Earth. That our hearts be open to joy, to wonder, to gratitude. That we should be careful about how we live with other people, neither bringing them harm, nor turning away from their suffering. That we are free of all coercion in matters of the spirit, but take up our tasks with glad hands and a joyous heart. That we let the long conversation between loving the world and loving the Lord go on in our hearts.

These are the spiritual tasks of a free people in a secular society. Oh, the fundamentalists of all types are aghast and cannot imagine that men and women will have holy hearts unless they are pressured by conformity. They say that they are fighting for God, but they are actually fighting for power over people. They may drag the whole world down with them. Who knows?

But what we are about is summed up by Theodore Parker "Be ours a religion which, like sunshine goes everywhere; its temple, all space; its shrine, the good heart; its creed, all truth; its ritual, works of love; its profession of faith, divine living."

Amen

*Editor's Note:*

*This first part of Rev. Schade's article comes from a sermon preached January, 2008; the second part, growing out of his previous Revival Workshop on Kenotic Christianity, will be published in the Mar./Apr. issue of the Good News.*

## GOOD NEWS JAN/FEB 2009 PAGE 2

### "Should I stay or should I go?" By Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

When I was in college, I used to listen to "The Clash," and one of their iconic songs was "Should I stay or should I go now?" As I sat down to write this column, that's the song that rang in my head, because of what I've been hearing from you out there in cyberspace. I'm receiving your emails and in some cases, I've called you to hear about what's going on with your life as a Christian in Unitarian Universalism. Let me tell you what I've heard so far:

- **One of you wonders if there is a place for you as a Christian in Unitarian Universalism, because your church community is indifferent at best, or hostile at worst, to your Christian identity;**
- **One of you is lonely because there are no UU Christians in your area and you want to engage with your Christian faith with other Unitarian Universalists;**
- **One of you has formally left not only the UUCF but Unitarian Universalism, finding it a spiritual desert for your needs**
- **One of you feels deeply connected to the UUCF and has made a significant financial gift to the institution out of gratitude for its very existence;**
- **Two of you are wondering what you can do with and for the UUCF**

I am so grateful for those of you who have chosen to write or call me to tell me a little bit about your story--and about where you are on the Christian journey. Your stories are both heart-breaking and hopeful, as you attempt to remain in this faith tradition and stay connected to the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship. By and large, the response has been that people are reluctant to leave Unitarian Universalism and want to remain connected to this particular faith tradition and this particular way of being a Christian.

Please know that the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship is here to support and nurture your faith development. I see the work of the UUCF as helping one another develop a deeper relationship with God and with Christ. Although we don't have a physical building, we have an active and engaged community through the web, through small groups and through our regular gatherings at General Assembly and Revival. In between the times of physical gatherings, what can you do to address some of the feelings of discomfort or isolation as a result of being a UU Christian?

First--reach out and ask for help. Call me or call Executive Director Ron Robinson for some guidance or coaching about how to be a Christian presence in your congregation. It helps to talk about it with the hope of building that beloved community--that is, attempting to connect with others who may have been wounded or, indeed, scarred by their Christian past. If you find you are in an area with no other UU Christians, let us know. We might be able to connect you with



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*...don't forget to pray. Jesus said: . . . and pray for those who persecute you" Prayer has helped me to see how I have been part of the dynamic. Prayer has softened my heart towards those who were initially wary or even hostile to my Christian faith. Prayer has helped me to understand and by so doing, in turn, have been understood.*

others, or, help you find an online community that could be a source of strength and comfort. Don't forget to visit the website regularly. It is updated regularly, and we now have what we call a "virtual monastery" online, which provides an opportunity for daily meditation, reflection and prayer.

Second--don't forget to pray. Jesus said: . . . *and pray for those who persecute you"* Prayer has helped me to see how I have been part of the dynamic. Prayer has softened my heart towards those who were initially wary or even hostile to my Christian faith. Prayer has helped me to understand and by so doing, in turn, have been understood.

Finally--partner with other members of the UUCF. There is no better way to connect with other UU Christians than to engage oneself with the tasks at hand. Working on Revival together, or staffing the booth at GA, or submitting an article for the Good News--these are ways that others can get to know you--and you them.

It is an honor and privilege to serve as your President, and I continue to be grateful to be walking this faith journey with you.

#### **Blessings on the New Year,**

**Kathleen Rolenz**

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### **GOOD NEWS JAN/FEB 2009 PAGE 3**

#### **Register Now For Revival 2009**

**Mar 26-29, Tulsa, OK**

**All Souls Unitarian Church**

**Don't Miss This Unique Spiritual Experience**

**We Need Your Presence**

Go to [www.uuchristian.org](http://www.uuchristian.org) and find out the latest news about Revival, and also from our home page click on the link that takes you to the Revival website where you can register online. If you would like to register by postal mail you can do so printing out the Revival brochure from the website, or from one of our printed Revival 2009 brochures. If you don't have one and would like to receive one, or more to share, call the UUCF office at 918-794-4637 or email [UUCFOffice@aol.com](mailto:UUCFOffice@aol.com). Remember this is not just for UU Christians, or just for UUs, or just for Christians. We hope all will be enriched and transformed by the loving spirit bringing us together.

Consider these Highlights of Revival over and beyond meeting with others in the spirit of Jesus:

**Bishop Carlton Pearson** preaching and the New Dimensions Worship Ensemble singing during keynote worship. Bishop Pearson's faith story and journey has made global news as he has embraced Christian Universalism, and as he and many of his previous New Dimensions Church have joined All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa. He is now a frequent lecturer and preacher around the country.

**Communion Service led by Rev. Lillie Mae Henley**, of Universalist National Memorial Church, Washington, D.C. UNMC, site of the 2003 UUCF Revival, is the national cathedral church of the former Universalist Church of America that joined to form the present day UUA.

**Prayer and Healing Service led by Rev. Jonalu Johnstone**, of First Unitarian Church, Oklahoma City. This has become one of the most inspirational moments in Revival. Rev. Johnstone has previously served as new congregation minister in Wisconsin and as the Growth Consultant for the Southwestern Conference of the UUA.

**Taize worship service**, following the style of chanting and singing popularized by the ecumenical center in Taize, France founded by Brother Roger.

**Opening Worship led by Rev. Gerald Davis**, of Church of Restoration-UU, Tulsa, multi-racial congregation, and ministers of the other three Tulsa UU churches. Rev. Davis is a dynamic preacher who is also director of the Tulsa County Department of Human Services. His background is also in the United Church of Christ. Church of the Restoration is located in the center of the African American community in Tulsa and near the site of the historic 1921 Greenwood race-based massacre that devastated the once thriving "black wall street" of America.

**Baptism Service, Saturday, 7 pm, led by UUCF President Rev. Kathleen Rolenz**, West Shore UU Church, Cleveland, OH area. If you are interested in being baptized during Revival, there will be a special series of small group meetings, exploring the meaning of baptism and your personal faith journey, during the time of the small group sessions. These will be led by Rev. Rolenz.

**Closing Worship service led by Rev. Tamara Lebak**, All Souls Church, Tulsa and co-editor of "Reverend X" on emerging generations of UUs.

**Closing Circle led by Rev. Suzanne Meyer**, of the UU Church of Cheyenne, Wyoming.

**Dynamic, innovative worship music and hymn singing throughout the Revival**, coordinated and presented by Rick Fortner of All Souls Church, Tulsa. Rick is not only a phenomenal jazz pianist but is a leading musician in the Tulsa area and will be bringing high quality music from musicians to each service.

**Centering Prayer Session, led by Barbara Schneeberg**, a facilitator with Contemplative Outreach. This will be an experience on the opening day of Revival as a kind of pre-Revival focus on Thursday afternoon. An opportunity for making the transition from our hectic lives and travels to Revival, and entering the spirit of Revival itself.

**Panel Discussion on The Emerging Church**, moderated by Rev. Susan Smith, district executive of the Southwestern Conference, along with Rev. Thom Belote of Shawnee Mission UU Church in Kansas, Rev. Ron Robinson, The Living Room Church, Turley, OK, and others.

**Small Group sharing** using small group exercises from the new UUA spirituality curricula "Spirit of Life," adapted for use by UU Christians by Rev. Melanie Morel-Ensminger of New Orleans, participants will be led to go deeper on their personal Christian journeys, gaining insights from their shared reflections and interactions. Each session is designed to bring group members into deeper Christian community through understanding and personal sharing.

Session 1 -- Sharing Our Journeys: Group members will take some time to reflect on how they got to Revival, using exercises that employ art, poetry, and symbol. After creating something tangible to symbolize their spiritual journey, participants will share with each other.



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Session 2 -- Our Relationship to and with Prayer: Groups will reflect on various aspects of prayer (praise, gratitude, petition, reparation, acceptance) and what these have meant in their lives. A special exercise will lead participants to create their own personal prayer.

Session 3 -- Affirmations and Closing:

To end our intense time of sharing with each other, group members will create affirmations for fellow members, and participate in an exercise that brings our Small Group community to a fitting close.

We are seeking experienced small group leaders to lead our spiritual small groups at Revival. Leaders should have experience with Small Group Ministry, Credo, or other spiritually-oriented small groups. These selected will receive all session materials prior to Revival. Please respond to [melanie.morelensminger@gmail.com](mailto:melanie.morelensminger@gmail.com) by March 1.

Workshops on Gnostic Christians, Walking the Labyrinth, "Saving Jesus: from Christian Right and Secular Left", Meditation and Stretching, Praying with Prayer Beads from many traditions, UU Christianity 101, and more to be announced soon on the website.

Catered Dinners and Lunches, and Programs and Hymn Singing at meals prepared by the All Souls Chef

Friday Afternoon Service Project at A Third Place Community Center in Turley, OK, just eight miles from All Souls in north Tulsa, and home of the UUCF, and viewing of historical documents and UUCF inventory

Free books, journals, newsletters, and other books for sale during Revival

Saturday night free to socialize and dinners and entertainment out.

Last, but certainly not least, the chance for many to see and witness the life of All Souls Church in Tulsa, with some 1700 members ([www.allsoulschurch.org](http://www.allsoulschurch.org)).

A chance to experience first-hand not only the spirit of Revival, but also the Tulsa churches have several ground-breaking initiatives: All Souls in Tulsa has transformed one of its worship services, the Sunday 11:30 a.m. one, and is making other innovative changes as it begins walking its path with Bishop Carlton Pearson and many members of his former church which has made national news for its embrace of universal salvation; Church of Restoration has been living for 20 years its multi-ethnic, multi-racial mission as a UU congregation in the historic black Greenwood district of Tulsa and creation of a Center for Racial Justice; The LivingRoom Church, an emerging church, has become a role model already in how to do missional, incarnational community church planting, and doing so in a multi-racial area that is the Tulsa zip code with the lowest income and lowest life expectancy; Hope Church in south Tulsa recently celebrated its 40th year and was part of the great outreach and expansion of that time that has made the Tulsa area benefit from such a strong UU presence.

A thank you to Revival Team members: Dean Drake, chair; Rev. Felicia Urbanski, Rev. Suzanne Meyer, worship coordinator; Rev. Melanie Morel-Ensminger, small group coordinator; Rev. Kelly Murphy-Mason, workshop coordinator, and Kelly Ratliff, website coordinator.

## GOOD NEWS JAN/FEB 2009 PAGE 4

### "Reclaiming Nazareth"

By Rev. Ron Robinson, Executive Director

This month, the UUCF turns 64 years old, and like all who reach that age now, we turn to celebrate and contemplate with the gospel according to Paul (McCartney) who sang: "will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm 64?" These are, in all seriousness, good questions for us these days, as we look at our relationship with the UUCF, with our small groups, our church, our Association.

As I write this, one of the Epiphany season selections from the lectionary of biblical readings to be used on an upcoming Sunday is from the first chapter of John 1:

*"...The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."*

This year, will we so embody the spirit of Jesus that others are drawn to be with us? Will we be peaceful healing, missional presences in our communities? Will we invite others to come and see what we have found? Will we continue to challenge and enrich our own faith lives by coming to be with others (to small groups, to Revival, to General Assembly, to our online forums, etc.) to see what God has for us through them? Let us never think we have depleted the wellsprings.

This year, will we defy expectations? Will we break the way others, and we too, have defined us? Being crazy about Jesus in our Unitarian Universalist world and ways can cause both other UUs and other Christians to wonder if our place of being, our home, is so small and out of the mainstream of influence that nothing good and lasting can come from us. And yet we have the witness of Nazareth. We know we are a living part of that history that took a small, marginal, fringe group of radical Jesus followers who over a few centuries became the dominant religious force in the Roman Empire. Our true home and place of the Spirit is to be co-creating with God little Nazareths wherever we go, from which surprising good and hope comes again and again.

January is that time of the world's calendar when we look backward and forward, as the god Janus was portrayed. Jesus' early followers were finding both fulfillment of their historic faith, and a new manifestation of that faith in their experiences with the one they'd found, or who found them.

In the UUCF, January is our midpoint of the year too. We look back and see much accomplished in 2008 with the new website, with an expanded General Assembly program and lecture by Father John Dear, with a wonderful new UU Christian Journal exploring many things related to Jesus and Judaism and Unitarian Universalism and more. We also launched a review of how we structure ourselves organizationally in order to nurture our organic movements, and we have created a new survey to help us see others and ourselves more clearly. In ways not quantified, last year like all our years we helped many people along their faith journey, whether or not they were already or ever became members of the UUCF, as they one on one encountered us and pondered with us the truths of their lives. And we are looking forward, as other news in these pages will show, toward new life in our Revival, and in our emerging new ways of being present at General Assembly, and in the new people that will become friends and leaders among us in the months to come. Just as it must have when those first disciples answered the call to "follow me," the heart beats a little beat quicker this time of the season, Epiphany's journeys leading us toward Lent and Easter, Nazareth leading to Jerusalem, the cross and empty tomb.

*"...The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."*

*The Rev. Hoehler wrote in 1968: "The UCF, it seems to me, possesses a golden opportunity in this period of denominational myopia. The UCF could, if it would, become the radical "underground church" in the Association. It could, if it would, by explicating the concept of Christ as God's man for others, bear witness to a faith which takes seriously its responsibilities to the world. It could, if it would, make clear the implications of such a concept for the establishment of a free but genuine servant church in our midst. It could, if it would, hold high the vision of a church flexible enough to shape and reshape its structures around the moving and varied shapes of mankind's needs. It could, if it would, become a small example to those individuals and churches in our Association who understand the mission of the church to be more than growth figures, budget evaluations, and the creation of happy suburban ashrams for sophisticated sectarian minds. The UCF could, if it would, exhibit what it means for an institution in our denomination to take as its mission Christ's command that it become the gracious neighbor to a needy humanity..."*



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Amid all the new plans and ideas and events, I often ground myself not only in the history of the church, but even in the history of the UUCF. January is a good month for us to do that in the spirit of looking back and forward at the same time. Lately I have been reading the Unitarian Christian Journal, vol. 24, from the summer of 1968. Then as now there was even a faster heartbeat in the pulse of the country. Then as now there were stirrings and anxieties aplenty in the Unitarian Universalist Association, and in how Christians would continue to be present. It was soon after that time that the UCF itself became the UUCF. On the wider front the UUA had released its first major study of itself since the 1961 merger. People were questioning such things as vision, mission, growth. The UUA set out a goal of growing to 500,000 adults between 1968 and 1980, and of course the reality is that the numbers fell or stayed even most years during that time. History is a good yellow light for any impulses to New Year's Projections. And I am reminded that all our visions and dreams are only made real due to the decisions of real people, you and me.

That issue of the Journal from 1968 was organized around three questions: where do we stand? where should we go from here? what calls us? Among the many responses I want to highlight those of the Rev. Harry Hoehler, minister emeritus now of First Parish in Weston, Mass., because they seem to foreshadow and echo many of the recent comments as we have pondered these questions again. And they are words worthy of repeating. Some of his words have come true among us; others continue to call to us.

The Rev. Hoehler wrote in 1968: "The UCF, it seems to me, possesses a golden opportunity in this period of denominational myopia. The UCF could, if it would, become the radical "underground church" in the Association. It could, if it would, by explicating the concept of Christ as God's man for others, bear witness to a faith which takes seriously its responsibilities to the world. It could, if it would, make clear the implications of such a concept for the establishment of a free but genuine servant church in our midst. It could, if it would, hold high the vision of a church flexible enough to shape and reshape its structures around the moving and varied shapes of mankind's needs. It could, if it would, become a small example to those individuals and churches in our Association who understand the mission of the church to be more than growth figures, budget evaluations, and the creation of happy suburban ashrams for sophisticated sectarian minds. The UCF could, if it would, exhibit what it means for an institution in our denomination to take as its mission Christ's command that it become the gracious neighbor to a needful humanity.

He continued: "Now, in order not to be misunderstood, let me make it clear that I am not suggesting that the UCF become a miniature U-U Service Committee. What I am suggesting is that it develop a worship life, and educational life, a community life established around the dual concept of gathering regularly to celebrate what we believe God is doing to reconcile our world and of scattering to do what is required of us to make this world of ours a more liveable and human place. Granted, many of us would stand on the fringe of such an organization. We would participate in its worship and corporate life only when able; but still it could stand for us as an example of a viable form which a true servant church might take. Thus I am suggesting that the UCF become more than a loosely knit association of individuals who gather yearly to celebrate past glories and frustrations. I'm suggesting that it adopt some of the structures of a church, not a residential church to be sure, but rather a church of dedicated persons who are committed to performing specific tasks for the renewal and reconstruction of their world and who come together to celebrate that fact and learn from one another.

He finished: "The UCF could do such things, I believe, if it only would. But to do so it must stop concerning itself with such rearguard and fruitless battles as the humanist-theist controversy. It must give up its own concern for growth, with heralding itself to the outside world, with enlarging its political power base within the Association, with making the denomination "Christian" and respectable. It must end its reactionary tendencies, that is, its almost unflinching negative response to anything the UUA does. Instead, let it do the things it can do best. Let it do the careful theological analysis which apparently the UUA is incapable of doing and discern what it means in our day to be a church in and for the world....What the UCF is called to do in these critical times is to become radical for the first time in its existence, to rethink its priorities, to align itself with those groups outside the UUA who have a vision of the church as mission, to sell its headquarters building and use the money received plus its annual dues to sustain the religious life of those Unitarian Christians who are working to alleviate some of the pain of our common life, and who need to gather, reflect upon, clarify and celebrate with one another what it means to heed Christ's call to become servants in the affairs of men."

These seem words of guidance not only for the UUCF now, especially as we enter our 64th year this month, but are words that can feed us as individuals in relationship to our own churches. Also, they seem good lessons we can share with others in the UUA who may find themselves now in positions of change and anxiety not unlike the journey we as UU Christians have made many years before. And, for what it is worth, they are also good words for the UUA itself as it contemplates again its being in and with the world. Thanks Rev. Hoehler, thanks to all upon whose shoulders we stand as the UUCF today, and as we do move forward in the new year, thanks to all who answer the call of Nazareth with us again.

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### "Four Building Blocks of Faith"

By John Tindal, UUCF member, Sumter, South Carolina

Richard Hooker (1554-1600), an Anglican priest, sought a middle way between the extremes of radical Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. He argued for a middle path "between the conflicting claims of infallibility, whether of the bible or of the pope....Our relationship to God, Hooker argued, is multifaceted, and no one way can exclude all others." According to Hooker, we need to balance scripture, tradition and reason.[1]

To these three, Albert Outler (1908-1989), a Methodist scholar, would include a fourth source of faith: experience. Today, these four "legs" are called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

Growing up in the Episcopal Church, I became familiar with Richard Hooker and his three legged stool – one leg each for scripture, tradition and reason. I was taught that we needed to maintain a balance among these three legs or our Anglican faith would be unbalanced.

As a youth, I was fascinated by science and the scientific method. By the time I reached my twelfth birthday, I no longer believed everything that I was being taught in Sunday school. I remember this clearly, because, in our church, children were confirmed when they reached their twelfth year. And I remember setting aside my disbeliefs in order to fit in with the group and be confirmed along with all of the others in my class.

About this time, our family visited the Unitarian Church in Charleston, South Carolina, where my father pointed out the grave of one of my ancestors. This was my introduction to Unitarianism. Fourteen years later, in 1966, I joined the Unitarian Fellowship in Columbia, South Carolina, and the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF).

After a few years, I realized that I had to make a choice. I could either be an isolated Christian in an increasingly humanistic UU community or I could be a religious liberal in a traditional Episcopal church.

I threw myself into working within a small Episcopal Church where I became a lay-reader and an adult Sunday school

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teacher. Prior to this, the bible had been a closed book to me. I had never been able to get past the begats and the dietary rules in the Old Testament. Our minister wanted me to teach the adult class using the lectionary readings each Sunday. About this time, I had an opportunity to attend a weekend retreat at St. Christopher Conference Center on Seabrook Island. Verna J. Dozier was the retreat speaker. She presented a method of self-directed Bible study that has literally changed my life. I've been teaching the lectionary since that time.

As a bible teacher, I was more and more confronted with questions about the source of the bible and about the early traditions of the church. I began to see the need for a balanced approach using scripture, tradition and reason.

I also saw the importance of experience. Each person in a class comes with his or her own life experiences. As a teacher, it's important to reach students where they are in their spiritual journey.

As a UU Christian, I feel a need to supplement our present UU principles with a set of Christian principles. For our consideration, I'm suggesting the adoption of scripture, tradition, reason and experience as four building blocks of our UU Christian faith.

**Scripture** – "We interpret scripture rightly when we do not try to interpret it by ourselves as if we were the first ever to ask what it means. Seeking the guidance of God's Spirit, faithful Christians before us and other faithful Christians in the church around us have also struggled to understand and be led by it, and we are to listen to them 'with respect.' In our time we have learned the importance of listening also to fellow Christians, past and present, who are different from us in gender, race, class, cultural background, and national origin. They help us avoid confusing biblical truth with our own limited perspective on it." [2]

According to Hooker, "the Bible is a fundamental source of our knowledge of God, but we also learn about God through human experience and rational reflection." [3]

**Tradition** – "Christians usually distinguish 'scripture' from 'tradition' in order to emphasize the stronger authority we give to the Bible as the word of God. Yet the bible itself is the selection of writings chose and revered by the faithful community. In the Second through fourth centuries, oral teaching or 'tradition' was a critical test in this process of forming the 'rule' or 'canon' of scripture. Christians chose their canon from those books of scripture that were in accordance with beliefs and practices, such as baptism and Eucharist, received from the apostolic generation. Scripture and tradition are thus deeply intertwined." [4]

**Reason** – "If we are to appeal to Scripture and to the interpretation given by the Fathers of the Church during the first four centuries of Christian faith, we must use our mind. We dare not claim that our minds can give us any infallible truth, but we must give thoughtful study and careful reasoning to the religious as to every other realm of experience." [5]

**Experience** – "Firsthand faith is the result of the experience of the holy within the life of the believer. It requires an internal and personal opening of the self to acceptance of and integration with the Divine. John Calvin declared that 'as long as Christ remains outside us, we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us.'" [6]

[1] The Anglican Vision, by James E. Griffiss, pages 26, 27.

[2] Christian Doctrine, Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr., page 13

[3] The Anglican Vision, by James E. Griffiss, page 27.

[4] Early Christian Traditions, by Rebecca Lyman, page 4.

[5] The Faith of the Church, by James A. Pike and W. Norman Pittenger, page 17.

[6] Reformed Spirituality, by Howard L. Rice, page 27.

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### Additional Notes of Interest

#### The UUCF at General Assembly 2009 Salt Lake City, UT, June 24-28 Sharing Our Presence

Look for these programs and events highlighting the UUCF presence at General Assembly, and check back to the [www.uuchristian.org](http://www.uuchristian.org) website for updates and more information:

GA Communion Service is planned to be co-sponsored with the Massachusetts Bay District of the UUA as one of their allocated GA program slots. The communion service preacher will be the Rev. Earl Holt of King's Chapel in Boston. When elected the 15th Minister of King's Chapel in Boston in December of 2000, Earl Holt was serving his 27th year as Minister of the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis. A native of New England and life-long Unitarian, he grew up in Concord, New Hampshire, and graduated from Brown University in 1967. Among many denominational responsibilities, he served as Chairman of the Board of Starr King School for the Ministry, Berkeley, California, where he received his M. Div. in 1972 and which awarded him an honorary doctorate during the School's centennial in 2004. He recently completed a term as Chair of the UUA Commission on Appraisal, which presented its latest quadrennial Report, Engaging our Theological Diversity, at the 2005 General Assembly in Fort Worth. Currently, among other community activities, he serves on the Boards of the UU Urban Ministry and the Mass. General Hospital Institute of the Health Professions, and is a Trustee of the Massachusetts Bible Society. Mr. Holt broadcasts a weekly radio commentary Sunday mornings at 8 o'clock on WCRB 99.5 FM. See [www.kings-chapel.org](http://www.kings-chapel.org) for more.

New This Year: A Larger, Shared Booth Space and Events. This year we will almost triple the size of our recent large General Assembly booth as we will share a joint programming space and booth space with the Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship and the UU Mystics. Each of us will continue to have the size of booth we have had in the past, for our own materials and gatherings and displays, but we will also share a common booth space of 300 square feet to be used for joint conversations and mini-GA programs throughout the hours the Exhibit Hall is open. Share with us your presence as we create this new multi-shared presence. We will have chances to hold our own programs in the enlarged space as well as joint programs with the other groups and others. As our own programming requests were denied this year, and as our loss



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of affiliate status prevented us from receiving former allocated program slots, we have been able to creatively respond in a way that will actually increase our presence during this important event. Come help us plan and carry out our GA presence. Check back with [www.uuchristian.org](http://www.uuchristian.org) under General Assembly links as we update and schedule our special booth events this year.

Annual Meeting, Dinner, Hymn Sing, will be held Saturday, June 27, from 6 to 8 pm at First Unitarian Church of Salt Lake City, 569 S 1300 E.

#### **UUCF Lending Library Opens**

We have begun our own UUCF lending library, especially for small group use, or for individuals presenting programs in their churches, or for their own personal spiritual growth. See below for some of the material we have begun making available for library rental free of charge, or for shipping costs only. Also if you have special material like tapes or DVDs or other material to include in the UUCF library, please send to our office or contact Ron Robinson. To check out material, or to find out when it will become available, contact the UUCF office.

---Saving Jesus: From the Christian Right and Secular Left, a DVD from the progressive Christian folks at [www.livingthequestions.com](http://www.livingthequestions.com). Twelve sessions featuring contemporary biblical scholars and pastors.

---Eclipsing Empire: Paul, Rome, and the Kingdom of God. DVD Scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan take a group on tour following the footsteps of the Apostle Paul and presenting the latest findings and understandings of Paul and the early church and Jesus' mission. Twelve sessions. also from [www.livingthequestions.com](http://www.livingthequestions.com).

---CD audio tape, "Caught Between The Bible and TV: Church in a New Age" by Brandon Scott, parables scholar and author and seminary professor and Jesus Seminar fellow.

---VHS Romero, movie starring Raul Julia as Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador.

---King's Chapel Book of Common Prayer

Check back to [www.uuchristian.org](http://www.uuchristian.org) as we add to our Lending Library of new and classic material.