



July/August 2009

## Gratitude

Rev. Ron Robinson



**F**ormer UUCF Board member and renowned theologian James Luther Adams tells the story once of "an old minister in a mill city in New England who used to preach annually a long sermon on the year's discoveries in astronomy. His people...bore this ordeal with patient resignation. Someone asked him, "What is the use of this sermon on the stars and astronomical space? He replied, 'My dear boy, it isn't any use, but it greatly enlarges my idea of God.'"

I came across that passage again as I write this, a week after a heart attack and a short stay in the hospital for some stent surgery on an artery and in my recovery period now, and as I await tonight the annual sermon God writes back on the same topic--the Perseids meteor shower. Some of my fondest memories have been of waiting patiently for the shooting stars, staring at the space between the stars, waiting for what may or may not burst across the sky at any given moment, reminding myself that even as the stillness seems so vast and permanent without any perceptible change or event that there is so much going on beneath my feet and also up where I am looking though I cannot see it.

Many of those Perseids memories have come as I have been at our regional church camp, here known as the Southwest UU Summer Institute.

I attended my first some 30 years ago. I was still in the process of leaving my childhood connection with Jesus Christ behind, and as I had always been enamored by all things astronomical, I was thrilled that the theme speaker at this first UU church camp I attended was the renowned scientist Ralph Alpher who helped, back in the Fifties, discover the evidence that led to the Big Bang theory. He had the most amazing slides as he talked, back thirty years ago, of the latest theories on the universe. There was, as I remember now, no talk of God. Atheism was strong in all the UUs around me, and a part of my path then too. Which was all right by me.

But each night after the talk and slideshow I would sit with friends on the shore of a lake and spend hours in the dark looking up and feeling, even on those times when meteors did not streak across the sky in front of us, that I was part of something more, connected not disconnected to time and eternity. In just a few years the works of Unitarian process theologians and scientists Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne would open up the word God for me and that feeling again, and then later for me the ultimate story and face of that God in and through Jesus Christ and the community created in his wake all brought it home for me again as my idea of God was both enlarged and made particular.

Now I am grateful for those UU atheists on my spiritual journey, then and now, but in these days of recovery and re-orientation underway I am even more grateful for this particular community of God known as the UUCF and the love you have shown me, the prayers you have sent, the offers of help that have come. James Luther Adams was also well known for reminding Christians that "by your fruits you will be known" as followers of



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## Good News

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### NEWS ABOUT THE GOOD NEWS

This is one of two editions that are produced only on-line. If you would like a hard copy mailed to you, please contact the UUCF office.

#### Wanted: Good News Editor

I've been enjoying the opportunity to help out as the Good News editor, but my work and travel schedule have made it a bit too challenging for me to continue to serve. We are therefore in need of a new editor! If you are interested in volunteering to serve as editor, please contact Ron Robinson.

Thanks, Erika Noll Webb

# A Double Share of Gratitude

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, UUCF President

**I**t's always the phone call, or the email or the voice on the other end of the phone that says your name, as if a question mark were attached, and then the words "it's... \_\_\_\_\_," —you fill in the name of your loved one. In this case, when I heard "it's Ron," I was hundreds of miles away, in the tiny town of Gimli, Manitoba, where my husband I spend two weeks of holiday with his family. I heard that our Executive Director, Ron Robinson, had had a heart attack, but I knew nothing else.

What could I do? Of course I called Ron's cell phone right away, knowing that he most likely would be unable to answer it, but hoping and believing that someone would. I hoped that his wife Bonnie would listen to the message and know that I was speaking for the hundreds of members of the UUCF in hoping and praying for his recovery. And then, I prayed, and I must admit, I prayed what some might call the "God Gimme" prayer. "Protect and keep Ron's life and health." "Be with Bonnie and his family." "Give us all strength." I had no idea if these prayers would be answered in the ways in which I intended them. I only knew that the act of praying to God kept me bound in love, hope and faith to God and to my love and affection for Ron and his family. I only know that prayer kept me grounded and able to stand with worry, fear and uncertainty.

Happily, Ron is still around to tell the tale of his trip to the hospital, his new diet regime and will be back to work before you even receive this Good News. But my gratitude knows no bounds as I realize how precious and fragile our relationships can be. I am grateful for Ron's ministry and his many gifts to and for the UUCF.

I am doubly grateful for the members of the UUCF who have agreed to serve on the UUCF Board of Trustees. Many have been members for several years; some are relatively new. All are excited in the work of the UUCF and being part of our present and our future. The list of names, and contact information is below. The Board of Trustees meets the 3rd Thursday of each month, from 5-6 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. This year, the Board is planning a fall face-to-face retreat, in Cleveland, OH from October 28-30. The purpose of this retreat is to develop a three year strategic plan. If you are interested in adding your ideas and suggestions to that agenda, please contact me by October 1, 2009.

I continue to be so grateful to be able to walk together with all you, in faith, in hope, and in love. Kathleen Rolenz

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Jesus; I have seen and enjoyed your fruits (as well as all those in my new diet).

I am grateful that through my now almost 20 years as a UUCF member, I have received so much that has sustained and nurtured me this past week especially. I have been saddened that my colleague and recent UUCF Board member Rev. Tim Jensen, who was one of those from whom I and others have received so much, died recently from his struggle with cancer just as I was getting home from the hospital with a new opportunity at living longer. A spiritual life is built up of moments, day by day, learning to pray, to trust, to think theologically, and act accordingly with others and through our own life. So many witnesses there have been like Brother Tim that have shared their knowledge and experiences and transformations in our publications over the years, in our programs at GA, in our deepening times of Revival and now through our online communities and the webministry. All of these ways the UUCF has made Jesus visible in the world has helped me now in fearful and anxious moments, and as I look forward to living in and toward Life Abundant and the multitude of changes in that journey.

Thank you to President Kathleen Rolenz and the Board and to Administrator Lisa Franklin and many more of you who have helped me now help myself as I take some medical leave and just gradually and occasionally do things like write this column and slowly come back to duties. Along with the prayers of current UUCFers, I am also blessed to be still, and to enjoy reading again the works of the UUCF that are also my companions and thinking of the lives that have enriched us all. Like the old minister said, to be of no use as the world and ourselves too often think of being of use, and to enlarge my idea of God and even more importantly to be enlarged by God.

I am also reminded acutely now of how we intersect with your lives--if you are in or just out of hospital or caring with loved ones who are, or in and out of prison or jail or caring with loved ones who are, or in and out of addictions or companioning those who are, or in and out of despair or of broken relationships or caring for loved ones who are. Know that the faithfulness of Jesus even unto the cross that we seek to emulate is not just a mind-game to us, and that our way of creating that faithfulness in the world may be a progressive liberal generous way, but it is not a way, as too often implied and unfortunately reinforced, that is only for the healthy and spiritually fit or just for those times in our lives. It is a discipline though, and I am sustained now not only by the presence of companions but also by those spiritual practices of prayer and meditation and study and sacred reading and biblical interpretations and inspiration from inspired lives that has been a fruit of the UUCF and the way the UUCF connects us with the larger faith.

This is my recent story. Please let us know of yours as we move forward into our most exciting year ever of the 65 years of the UUCF. Blessings, thanks, and more soon, Ron

## Singing Jesus

The seventh Jesus Retreat  
on November 20 - 22, 2009  
at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham



In our first five retreats we discussed Jesus and his teachings. Last year we looked at paintings, drawings and sculptures of Jesus. This year we are going to sing, chant and hear texts which pray to and interpret Jesus in a variety of ways. Those who wish to will be encouraged to sing interpretations which they value. In this field we are all musicians and all amateurs.

We will again enjoy the hospitality of the brothers at Glastonbury Abbey and take part in their simple services in the morning and evening. Again, we'll have time to nap, talk or walk early on Saturday afternoon, and will celebrate our own communion service on Sunday morning. A few of us will have supper ready on Friday evening.

The cost for the weekend will be \$130. Driving directions and a collection of songs will be mailed to all registrants. You may register by sending a check for \$130 payable to:

Carl Scovel  
36 Hampstead Road  
Jamaica Plain MA 02130.

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Questions? Call 617 - 522 - 3681 or email [carlscovel@comcast.net](mailto:carlscovel@comcast.net) .We'll need a minimum of fifteen registrants and have room for ten more than that.

I invite those of you who register to suggest songs, chants and other musical texts addressed to or about Jesus, which are meaningful to you. They can be hymns, folk songs, chants, chorales, excerpts from masses or cantatas, blues or other genres. If possible, please send the text and music in paper form. If it is a performance piece, let us know if you can bring a disc, CD or audiotape of the piece, And if you'd like to sing a song or two yourself, don't be shy and let us know. You'll be among friends.

If you know of someone who might enjoy this retreat, please forward this message to them. We'll be glad to pick up travellers at plane, train or bus stations and drive you to Glastonbury.

Blessings on us all! Carl Scovel

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