

April 7, 2010

## Living and Serving in Ever-Widening Circles

### A Message from Our Minister

A couple of months ago, the Board voted to support the creation of a Sunday morning with two services. Our vibrant growth, our yearning for greater service and our desire to share our Unitarian Universalist Good News has made this move not only desirable, but essential.

The Board requested that a Task Force of people representing various key program areas in the church, along with the Staff, the Minister and the Board President, lead this process. For two months, that diligent Task Force discussed, researched and weighed the options. After reaching out to the congregation via survey, dialogue with religious education parents, the choir and various committees, consultation with the Board, conversations with numerous other congregations, online research, review of resources from the Unitarian Universalist Association and discussion with the Staff and myself, the shape of that second service is coming into focus.

One of the toughest things to decide was the timing of Sunday morning. We took into account the need for coffee hour, smooth logistical transitions between worship services, enrollment, volunteers and opportunities to expand religious education for children and adults, staffing concerns and our musical ministry. Finally, we arrived at the times of 9:30 and 11:15 with a 10:30 coffee hour in between for all to unite (and an optional second coffee hour following the second service for those who choose to stay). Best practices from sister churches showed us that any earlier in the morning tends to be too early for optimal participation and that a minimum of 45 minutes is critical for a successful transition to a second morning service. We believe that, for now, this structure will create the greatest possibility for success.

This is an exciting time to be a part of Countryside, and, as the daffodils start to show their colors, I can't help but draw the parallel that so much is flowering here as well. Of course, change is change; it can be exciting and disconcerting at the same time. We want to make this next natural step supporting one another. The Implementation Task Force will be present at upcoming coffee hours to answer questions, address concerns and accept volunteers. In the meantime, I encourage you to dream about the opportunities a second service presents for you personally: a chance to participate in music ensemble/choir, religious education, greeting, ushering and more and still be able to attend a worship service independent of these pleasures and responsibilities.

A few weeks ago, I quoted Rainer Maria Rilke in the Sunday sermon from his poem *The Falcon*. Writing of the spiritual life he said, "I live my life in widening circles." That is just the path we have chosen as a congregation... to widen our circle, open our hearts and embrace the world.

### From the President

The Board of CCUU is especially excited about the plans for a second service, beginning in the fall. While this is change, for sure, it is a change that will allow us to grow and serve both current and prospective members in unique, even presently unknown ways. It will also give us a wonderful opportunity to know our children, youth and RE teachers in a way we have been unable to previously. It is delightful to see the way the staff has endorsed this process so wholeheartedly, and has already made so many thoughtful plans to accommodate the additional service.

In our research we've learned that other churches have found the addition of a second service to provide new energy to their congregations. We feel this is exactly what will happen at CCUU.



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## Volunteering

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*Submitted by Larry Frank*

Do you hear that? It's subtle, but it's there. If you listen carefully, you'll be rewarded by the sweet and rhythmic sounds of opportunity knocking. With the coming changes, there are concerns and there will be adjustments for us all, but one area in particular that we can all embrace is increased opportunities to volunteer at Countryside. Even better, there are multiple ways to do it, ensuring you can find a way that fits best for you. Perhaps you've been wondering how you can meet more people at Countryside. Maybe you're more a "behind the scenes" type of person. Perhaps you've been "hidden away" providing leadership in religious education and would like to add a little more at the other end of the building. From new members to the more seasoned, and even for our regular visitors who haven't yet committed to membership, with the added second service, opportunities abound!

Could it be that there are ways to volunteer at Countryside that you just haven't considered? Whether it be now having the chance to volunteer in religious education AND be present for Sunday services; whether you could see yourself ushering, doing readings, or helping with coffee and clean-up; whether it be greeting newcomers, helping in the office or with sanctuary care, or learning and coordinating the Sunday sound system; whether it be great ideas you have that need expressing, through an affirmation or perhaps adult faith development; or whether you play an instrument or sing and have seen the choir and music program with no room for you... the weather is changing, all these programs are expanding, and the time is NOW!

### **Dare to Dream**

On April 11, 18, and 25, you will have the chance to help us prepare for a successful move to two services. On those dates during coffee hour, we would like people to register for fall religious education and volunteer to help in two areas on Sunday mornings starting in the fall.

Countryside's move to two services this fall offers opportunities to jump in, wherever you feel comfortable, perhaps unlike any other time in the Church's history. So listen carefully, to that sound of opportunity knocking, and perhaps another sound, of your own inner voice, telling you the best way you can embrace volunteering at Countryside this fall. There's something for everyone and best of all, you won't be alone!

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## Music

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*Submitted by Liana Allison and Jane Matthews*

We are happy to have been asked to represent the choir (together with Lisa Christensen, who also sings in choir) and the music committee (together with Sheryl Skifstad) on the Second Service Task Force as we plan to add an additional worship service next year.

We are personally excited to see this long-awaited sign of our church's growth come to fruition. Together with our fellow committee members and musical friends, we stand ready to support our music director as he begins planning the nuts and bolts of providing rich and contextually appropriate music for both our services.

### **Musically Speaking**

The Countryside Choir is proud of its long history of providing both special music for our worship services and continuity through the many phases of our church's evolution and growth. With two services there will be additional opportunities for these and other dedicated and talented musicians of our congregation to add their voices and musical offerings to our worship experience.

For the time being, our Countryside Choir will continue to sing at the later service, though from time to time we look forward to singing at both services. Please try not to think of the later service as the "choir service" and the earlier service as something less. On the contrary, expect to be delighted and inspired by the new musical offerings that will present themselves in the coming year, particularly as they apply to the early service.

You know Jeff, and you know he's committed to the highest-quality music that he and the other musicians can provide for our worship services. Regardless of time of day (or night, as it is often the case with our late-night choir rehearsals!), Jeff urges us all -- choir members, soloists, and the various vocal and instrumental ensemble members he invites to be part of worship at Countryside -- to strive for excellence. Suffice it to say, whether you choose to attend the first or second service on Sundays, you will continue to be lifted up spiritually and connected to the worship experience through music.

### **Join Our Merry Band of Minstrels!**

We look forward to growing to two services and see this growth as an opportunity to grow our music circle, allowing more people to offer their gift of music to the congregation. The challenge and subsequent reward of personal and musical growth, as well as spiritual connection, is a great motivator for those of us who already participate in Countryside's music program. If you are so inclined, we hope you will share your gifts and reap these benefits as well! Please contact Jeff at [music@ccuu.org](mailto:music@ccuu.org) to discuss opportunities as we plan for this growth together.

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## Religious Education (RE)

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*Submitted by Colleen Vahey and Clif Dahlgren*

A move to two services brings many opportunities for creativity and innovation. Over the past several years, thanks to the congregation's generous support and dedicated volunteers, we've built a very strong and vibrant RE program. We believe our RE experiences will continue to grow and thrive as we expand the opportunities for more involvement and learning.

### Opportunities

This move aligns with many of the RE Council's goals, including:

- Provide more outreach to families and young people seeking a spiritual home. In the past six months, we've welcomed more than 30 young visitors to our RE program!
- Move from year-long themes to create quarterly RE "units" for Grades 1-5; by narrowing our focus we broaden our understanding, and engage our young people with relevant topics in core curriculum areas.
- Increase learning and participation in worship, ritual and the arts
- Create more opportunities for social action and service learning
- Build a multigenerational community. We have a unique opportunity and challenge to create opportunities for all ages to gather, worship, serve and learn together!

### RE Classes Offered

Our plans for structuring the RE program are still a work-in-progress, but here's a general overview:

\* Childcare will be available from 9:15am-12:30pm by two paid childcare providers.

\* Young people in 1st grade and older, will often attend the first 20-25 min. of worship, followed by RE classes

\* The last Sunday of each month will be a "Faith in Action" Sunday. Young people in 1st-5th grade will begin with Spirit Circle worship in Atherton Hall followed by learning activities related to social or environmental action.

\* RE Classes for Chalice Children (ages 2-3) through 8th grade will be offered at the 9:30am service; at least one mixed-age RE class will be offered at 11:15am. We encourage you to consider the 11:15 RE time for a fun mixed-age class - Camp CCUU!

\* Senior High Youth will meet at 11:00am each Sunday.

\* We are exploring the option of offering a senior high covenant group to meet Sundays from 9:45-10:45am.

### What's Needed

\* **Spring Registration** - We're asking all current

members and visitors to register for RE now to allow time to adequately organize teaching teams and curriculum for next year.

\* **Flexibility and Understanding**- as attendance patterns adjust, and more new families visit, we will appreciate your flexibility to make adaptive changes during the year.

\* **Parent Commitment** - as much as possible within your family arrangement, we ask parents to make a commitment to regular attendance and involvement; families are also encouraged to continue supporting one another with carpools, etc., as needed.

\* **Volunteer Commitment** - we look forward to the opportunities for more people to become involved in the RE program. We will need 65-70 RE Teachers and Assistants (6-weeks); 8 people to help plan and lead "Faith in Action" Sundays, as well as other volunteers to lend their particular skills and interests — Artists, Musicians, Storytellers, etc. We currently have a total of 65-75 RE volunteers each year; next year we anticipate 85-90 volunteers will be needed to help our RE experiences continue to grow and thrive! Several people have already told us how excited they are to teach, since they will no longer need to choose between worship, choir & volunteering in RE.

Thank you for your generous support of the RE program, and for creating the opportunities for more people to experience CCUU as their spiritual home!

**focus**

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#### The Second Service Task Force

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Colleen Vahey, Director of Religious Education

Jeffrey Hamrick, Music Director

Laurie Lantz, Administrator

Liana Allison (Music)

Vid Axel (CCRC, Forum)

Judy Ball (Board President)

Cathleen Chay (Membership)

Lisa Christensen (Worship)

Clif Dahlgren (RE)

Larry Frank (Lay Ministry, Ctte on Ministry)

Jane Matthews (Music, Welcoming Congregation)

Peggy Simonsen (Board, Personnel Committee)

Sheryl Skifstad (Music)

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## Membership

*Submitted by Cathleen Chay*

As we move forward with a second service, the Membership Committee is excited and challenged to provide consistent, inclusive, extensive hospitality every Sunday from 9 am through mid-day. Having two services offers us, literally, room to grow. It will provide needed sanctuary space for visitors, who in turn may become members with gifts and talents that enrich our congregation. A second service will bring in even more visitors than we now experience, which will present both opportunities and challenges.

### Opportunities

- Enlisting our youth and RE families as greeters
- Offering an all-congregation Radical Hospitality training program including a Sunday morning tutorial, FOCUS articles, emails
- Youth training through RE
- Adult training classes for new volunteers

### Challenges

- Visitor parking for the second service.
- Recruiting Greeters and Hosts for Newcomers Corner for both services
- Finding and training teachers and mentors for Path to Membership classes

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## Staffing

*Submitted by Peggy Simonsen*

Countryside's staff is fully engaged and enthusiastic about the move to two services. However, this change will require additional work by all of them. It will also require us to provide the staffing that we have really needed for quite some time to provide the level of program and support for a congregation of our current size. In order to facilitate this change, we have budgeted for additional staff hours and help in this year's budget. Jeff Hamrick's salary is being increased minimally to reflect his time and involvement in providing music for a second service. We also plan to hire a long and much-needed religious education assistant who will contribute 10 hours per week, as both youth and adult RE expand. We are very fortunate to have the current volunteer services of Debbie Lee in the office 10 hours per week to assist Laurie, our congregational administrator, whose work has been steadily increasing and will increase further in support of two services. Also, we will ask our sexton to work Sunday mornings to ensure an orderly Atherton Hall for two coffee hours. In addition, we plan to expand the Sunday hours of our childcare provider.

We have intentionally limited staff increases to a minimal level with the hope that volunteer assistance will play a significant role as we make this transition. We intend that, as membership continues to increase, we will be able to step up and comfortably provide the level of staffing that will support our continued growth and our staff and called minister as they carry forth our shared vision.

Of course, our ability to take this step and widen our circle will depend upon the generosity of the pledges and the result of this current Stewardship Drive. Yet one more reason, that "Now is the Time." The staff is ready for this exciting change, are you?

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## Worship

*Submitted by Rev. Hilary and Lisa Christensen*

The move to two services will be an exciting challenge for worship! In order to sustain a sense of congregational connection, the sermon and message will be the same at both services. The purpose of a second service is to widen our circle while keeping our center. The Worship Council and Music Committee are working closely together to assure that each service has the same richness and depth that we are used to in one service on Sunday morning.

Of course, for those of you who simply did not get your fill at the service - you can double your fun by attending two!

The work of Worship Council, which creates and sustains our most significant congregational shared event, often goes unnoticed as it tends to come off with only minor snags week after week and year after year. Behind-the-scenes, there is care and tending of the sanctuary, coordination of readers, sound production, support and coordination with Music, and connection with the Religious Education Program. There is also production of special worship events (solstice spiral, evening worship, flower communion, Ingathering, and more), as well as our holiday services at Easter, Christmas, Christmas Eve, Earth Day, and all the other things we are free to honor and celebrate as Unitarian Universalists. Worship Council has ongoing discussions about what is meaningful in worship and how to enhance the experience to fulfill the spiritual and intellectual needs of all participants.

The volunteer needs we have are, as in other areas, substantial, and yet they are things that you can help with without detracting from your Sunday morning experience. In fact, you might enhance it.

We need readers, ushers, pulpit and candle folks and sound hands. If you are interested in being a reader, we will hold a basic "orientation to the pulpit" meeting some time in August to coach people on reading and to get them comfortable with the pulpit. If you are interested in helping with sound - always much appreciated - there will be good trainings offered on that technology. If you are interested in ushering, you will be warmly welcomed and given comprehensive instructions.

This is an exciting time for our church and we are fortunate to have each other as we transition to a church with even more opportunities for growth and fulfillment.