



Unitarian Universalist Church of South County
A member of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations



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June 2, 2005

Minister's Report to the June 2005 Annual Meeting

I have never been more proud to serve UUCSC than during this, our third year of shared ministry. We have strengthened institutionally, broadened our outreach, and begun to plan seriously for our future.

Congregation Grows in Numbers, Again

You have already heard in President Dave Kinnear's report this year UUCSC grew from a small to a midsize congregation. Our adult membership surpassed 150, our Children's RE enrollment reached almost 90 children and youth (all of whom participate at least once a month), and our service attendance has jumped as well. Would you believe that if you look at the attendance figures for Sunday worship, and compare them to just one year ago, you'll find that in 2004 we averaged twenty more each Sunday?

Shared Ministry Deepens

As we've grown as a community, we've needed to find ways to continue the personal and spiritual growth that comes from close relationship. New this year, the eight Covenant Groups of 8-12 people were a great success in this area. Over half of our adult membership participated. Given the popularity of Covenant Groups, we will launch a new set next fall.

This was also the first year that I spent the fifth Sunday of five-Sunday months with the UUCSC children. My ministry is to the children as well as the adults of this congregation, and I appreciated these rare opportunities to spend quality time with the entire group in their classroom and social action settings. Our time led to deeper bonds...and some surprisingly frank questions from the kids about our religion!

Communication Improves

As we have become larger, we've had to change the way that we communicate with each other. The more of us there are, the harder it is to keep track of all that is going on. There have been noticeable improvements in our communication this year, including the quarterly informational meetings and newsletter updates the Board now provides. The Covenant of Right Relations we adopted (after four informal congregational meetings) will ensure that we can retain our community's character as we continue to expand rapidly. More needs to be done to open the channels of communication within the entire congregation.

Banner Year for Outreach

I have never heard of a church our size having achieved the level of *positive* attention we have gained in a major metropolitan newspaper over the course of one year. To my knowledge, we

Minister: Rev. John Millspaugh; **Minister Emeritus:** Rev. Robert Jordan Ross
President: Dave Kinnear; **Vice-Pres:** Lynn Cowan; **Treasurer:** David Keen; **Secretary:** Margaret Huddleston Pierce

had not appeared in the *Orange County Register* before, but this year we were the subject of *seven* significant articles. Five of these articles featured my work for Marriage Equality for all couples. The internet versions of several of these articles linked directly to the UUCSC website! (My greater ministry aboard the Marriage Equality Caravan was also the top story on our denomination's website for a week—thank you for your support of that important work). Two additional *OC Register* articles featured Peace Circle members and their efforts to create a culture of dialogue and bring about a more peaceful world.

But wait, there's more! My marriage equality work was the subject of a feature article in the *Orange County & Long Beach Blade*, and mentioned recently in the *LA Times*. Finally, our church was a featured congregation in *OC Weekly's* annual "Best of OC" issue! All this publicity led to speaking invitations I accepted at Mission Viejo High School, Aliso Niguel High School, and the Laguna Niguel City Council. Local newspapers now turn to us when seeking a liberal religious voice. We are becoming better and better known in the community!

Other Important Achievements

Rather than repeat him, I refer you to President Dave Kinnear's report for the following achievements not to be missed: The launching of three new committees planning for our long-term future (Comprehensive Planning, Capital Campaign, and New Facility); the acquisition of a long-term renter (who this week committed to resolving the problems that had been reported); the Board's movement toward a "policy governance" structure; the hard work of UUCSC committees (your participation would be welcomed by many committees in need of one or two more members!), and the excellent summer worship service schedule created by the Worship Committee.

Professional Ministry Honored

I have been encouraged to share with you a few personal accomplishments from the year as well.

- A sermon I preached at UUCSC was chosen by Interweave Continental, an international UUA Affiliate Group, as this year's "outstanding sermon on an issue affecting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and related people." As a result, I will preach the sermon at the UUA General Assembly in Texas at the end of June.
- I organized a South Orange County Clergy group, consisting of clergy representing the Hindu, Episcopal, Reform Jewish, Unitarian Universalist, and United Church of Christ traditions.
- I was selected from my peers to serve as the sole representative of California UUs at a televised press conference in Sacramento.
- My colleagues who form the Pacific Southwest District of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association—spanning Arizona, Nevada, and Southern California—have chosen me to serve as their President for the next two years.
- I have been asked to write the Social Justice chapter of the UUA's upcoming national Coming-of-Age curriculum.

Most Importantly

In the midst of all our accomplishments as a community, we've maintained and I daresay improved the most essential, all the great social groups and events, Adult Forums, social action, Sunday services, and all the things we have always loved doing as part of life in UUCSC! We

have personally supported each other through life's transitions, joyous and painful—births, weddings, deaths, not to mention a contentious national election and an ongoing war, in which some of our members served and others worked to bring to resolution. Our congregational life has continued unabated, doing what it does best: comforting us when we are afflicted and afflicting us when we have gotten too comfortable.

Transitions

It has been such a pleasure to serve with Jo Franco—she will be deeply and truly missed not only by the congregation, but by her supervisor. Working with Jo was a delight. So was seeing all that she did to support the CRE program and the children of UUCSC. We send her on her way with great hopes for an excellent career in UU Religious Education.

I also bid goodbye, in a sense, to Dave Kinnear, who has served as president during my entire ministry at UUCSC. I learned a great deal from his leadership, and am glad that he will still be here with us, so that we can continue to benefit from his many gifts so generously shared.

So What is in Store Next Year?

- It looks like we will have the help of a UUA Consultant to plan our transition to another building within the next several years. With this consultant's assistance, we will become much more intentional about our purpose and direction as a congregation.
- We will develop a *robust, practical, visionary* plan detailing our practical hopes for UUCSC in the coming five years!
- We will strengthen our invitational nature, making clear to newcomers and old-timers alike the various opportunities that UUCSC offers for involvement of all kinds. In this way, we become a much more vital congregation.
- We'll see more in the way of Adult Religious Education programs, in addition to Covenant Groups.
- We will strengthen our social outreach through a much-improved, systematic, growing social action program.
- I will work with UUA President Bill Sinkford to attempt to obtain UUA funding to help get the word out about our congregation.
- We will continue the current programs you treasure at UUCSC.

I love who we are now, and am enthusiastic about our growing vision of who we want to become. It is a privilege to serve with this congregation, and I look forward to the next year of our shared ministry with great anticipation.

Yours in Faith,

Rev. John Millspaugh