

Report from the Senior Minister
The Rev. Jane Rzepka
March 12, 2006

We really don't mean to do it. But there's no standing still in the service of our mission, and so we continue leaping forward into areas that when I arrived at the CLF six and a half years ago, we'd never thought of, or heard of. Take a walk with me down memory lane if you will, in gratefulness for the Board's work and support through these years:

- **We used to scramble to respond to a few prisoners who wrote to us. Now we have a prison ministry busting at the seams and a minister to serve the program.**
- **We used to send *Quest* out in print. We still do that, but now, thanks to podcasting, you can go to iTunes, subscribe to *Quest*, zap it to your ipod and listen to it wherever you want, or read it or listen to it online.**
- **We used to hope that young adults would somehow find us. Now we've invited them in in the form of the CYF, at 250 members strong in less than a year.**
- **We used to suggest RE activities over the phone. We still do that, but now we email fully online weekly RE classes to subscribers and members who want them.**
- **We used to photocopy curricula and mail them out. We still do that, but now we have a raft of online courses.**
- **Our ministry used to flow "from us to them." Now we minister to one another in covenant groups.**
- **We used to communicate with our members in print. Now we do that, and we have an amazing Web site too, but we hear a variety of voices on our email lists.**
- **We used to send our children's magazine, *uu&me*, to hundreds of children at a loss of \$23,000 a year. Now we send *uu&me* to thousands of children by way of the *UU World*, and we make a profit.**
- **We used to read members' comments when they came in the mail. We still do that, but now we have online forums for talking together.**
- **We used to hire seminarians. Now we are a proud teaching church ready to welcome two interns next year.**
- **We used to open envelopes and process checks. Now we do that, and we process online payments, credit cards, automatic payments, and PayPal.**
- **We used to answer the phone, write down the jewelry orders on a special form, and mail the order. We still do that, but now we have a shopping cart online.**
- **We used to be \$100,000 in debt to the UUA. Now we are free of debt.**
- **We used to print out statement mailings in alphabetical order. And then print out envelopes by zip code. And sit around the table for a week matching them up, and sealing and stamping them. Now we have automated statement mailings.**

- **We used to serve small UU groups in the USA. We still do that, but now we serve** international groups, **too.**
- **We used to select sermons and edit *Quest* by hand, finally leaving the copy on the designer's porch in hopes that it wouldn't blow away. Now** the *Quest* process is totally electronic .

But you know what? One thing hasn't changed: The importance of the CLF Board of Directors. In large part, this is all your doing. Thank you's come into the office every day, and I am passing them along to you today.

Staff Report
Lorraine Dennis, Executive Director
March 2006

My report will focus, as it often does, on the CLF staff, but I want to tell you about our recent grant applications and awards as well.

We received a grant from the UU Funding Program last fall for \$10,000 for the *Church Builder* project. This project has two parts – the *Make Your Own Sunday* database and *Small UU Group Support* list. We have established a new email list called “Starting Small” which includes all the Church on Loan contact people and quite a few CLF members from the CLF-L email list who are in very small groups. Beth Murray is the staff person on the list and is able from time to time to post suggestions and information that comes our way via the UUA. These folks are very supportive to each other. The *Make Your Own Sunday* database will contain over 1,000 service elements which are searchable by key word, tone, subject, and author, and will allow small groups preparing worship to mix and match the many edited service components that the CLF has on our Website.

We also received one of the first-ever grants from the UU Women’s Federation Grants Panel for \$2,500 for *Hope not Hell: Building a UU Women’s Prison Ministry*. Patty Franz will be the lead staff person on this project to research and create a plan for expanding the prison ministry to more incarcerated women. We expect to participate in a UUWF workshop at GA this year.

We have two grant applications at the UU Funding Program right now: One for *The Sources: a Unitarian Universalist Cantata*, which is the grant you voted on at your February meeting. The other is for *Companions in Faith*, to the Social Justice Panel, which will create interactive UU religious education correspondence courses for incarcerated members and our free world CLF members without electronic access. We’ll know later this spring if these grant applications are funded.

Now, a word about the CLF staff. A couple of years ago, you asked me to consider hiring more long-term staff and fewer seminarians to work in the CLF office. I took your advice and we now have three key people on the staff who have brought stability to the CLF. Donna Dudley, Fiscal Administrator (26 hrs), Iris Hardin, Membership Administrator (24 hrs), and Beth Murray, Church on Loan Coordinator/Librarian (21 hrs) have all recently met with me to complete an evaluation process and we really enjoyed talking about their responsibilities and hopes for the future. It was an excellent process and helped us to establish some great goals for this year. As I prepare for my sabbatical, April 24-May 30, 2006 and July 10-September 5, 2006, I have complete confidence in the ability of the CLF Staff to keep the office running well while I am away. You will see in their reports all the important work they do for our church community.

Finally, my heart-felt thanks to all of you for the good work you do for the CLF and for Unitarian Universalism. I have so enjoyed coming to know you and will sorely miss those who are leaving the board this year. We are all part of a pretty small family and I will look forward to seeing you from time to time at GA or upstairs at Eliot and Pickett.

Report to the CLF Board
March 2006
from Lynn Ungar, minister for lifespan learning

Covenant Groups are expanding, with two new groups forming.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) now include groups for retirees, GLBT folks, people dealing with physical illness, people dealing with mental illness, UU Christians and UU pagans. The group for people living outside the US doesn't currently seem to be active, and may need to be disbanded.

RE on the Web Site continues to evolve as we work to make resources more complete and easier to find. Some highlights include the KidTalk web page for kids, parents and educators, which changes monthly, and has expanded to include sections on spiritual practices and relating to our UU principles; and our Index of RE Resources, which is searchable by topic, age, etc., and is continually updated to include links to all of our CLF RE resources.

On-Line Courses continue to expand. Recently completed courses on meditation and the Bible were well-attended, and there are strong sign-ups (13 to 15 students each) for April classes entitled *Our Way of the Spirit* (taught by Roy Phillips and Linda Giesen) and *This I Believe* (taught by Amanda Aikman). I am working to ensure that we have classes scheduled to cover the areas of UU Identity, Spiritual Practice, Theology and Faith Development and Ethics and Social Justice. You can see a complete list of scheduled classes at www.uurgl.com/learn. Our new system of registration and payment (\$40/class) through Paypal seems to be working well.

CLF Forums are now located at the Online Learning Center, and are back in business. I have taken responsibility for posting questions related to the month's issue of *Quest* to get conversation started.

Curriculum continues to be a major site for my efforts as I create CLiF Notes: A Monthly Curriculum for Families and Small Groups. This curriculum is emailed out to the CLF-RE list, but is available for subscription (\$99/year) for non-members. Samples of this curriculum are available on the web site, but current issues are only available through membership or subscription.

REsources in *Quest* gets good reviews from colleagues who enjoy my column. Let's hope the members do, too.

Other areas under exploration include ways to better support online group leaders, online classes designed to appeal beyond the CLF membership (such as trainings for covenant group facilitators and lay pastoral caregivers), grant possibilities and creating an area on the web site where people could download simple recordings of songs to use for RE or home worship.

**Respectfully submitted,
Lynn Ungar**

Report on 2005 Activity for CLF Board Meeting
Donna Dudley, CLF Fiscal Administrator

During 2005 we processed 3966 individual donations. That averages approximately 76 gifts/week to process and record. These gifts comprised 1280 CLF member households, 30 ChurchOnLoan subscriptions, 111 (those who are *not* CLF members), and 98 CYF member & ally donations.

Additional sources of revenue (and associated expense) that require accounting for include uu&me, retail sales of Jewelry, Notecards, Order of Service covers, online Religious Education courses, etc. Each of these components of the operating statement have a some overlapping, as well as many differing, accounts associated with them. As we expand our services and website there are concomitant costs and complexities that can be hard to foresee and plan for.

One important addition to my responsibilities in 2005 was the financial management of Church of the Younger Fellowship. Some donations are made to CYF through their website via PayPal. Some are made through the CLF contribution method, and processed here on our POS. Regardless of where and how the funds are donated, we are responsible for posting the gifts into the individual donor records in the Raisers Edge database. I also generate monthly income/expense reports with supporting detail for CYF. We also may be asked by Michael Tino for detailed giving information for their fundraising purposes.

One fun thing that I did last year was a Business Analysis Project on CLF Jewelry, for a group project in an accounting course I was enrolled in. The project evaluated the past four years of income/expense, made some assessments, evaluated the website, inventory, and business arrangement with our fulfillment person in New York. I have the PowerPoint presentation in the office and can show to anyone who may be interested.

In addition to accounting functions, the other component of my responsibilities involve running queries on Raiser's Edge for Quest, canvassing, statements and other miscellaneous data that may be needed.

Report to the CLF Board, April 2006
from Iris Hardin, Membership Administrator and *Quest* Publication Manager

I continue to divide my 24 hours each week amongst a variety of responsibilities.

Membership Administration

- **While I continue to receive all email sent to the CLF mailbox, I now benefit from the assistance of a college student who files and processes membership applications. I continue to answer inquiries from both members and non-members, some of which require research, some standard replies to common questions, and others the input from other CLF or UUA staff.**
- **I continue to perform or delegate the following tasks: process new CLF/CYF member applications, discontinue members who no longer wish to affiliate as CLF members, update member information in the UUA database. I handle all "tricky" membership cases.**
- **I participate in the "phone ministry" of the church. This is something I believe it's essential that every staff member do.**
- **During the past year, we've had 425 people sign up for trial memberships; 65 converted to full, contributing memberships (15%). During the same period, we've had 146 people sign up for full memberships (i.e., these are contributing members). Note: I only counted one person per household when tallying these numbers. So if a husband and wife with 2 children joined as full members (or trial members), I counted them as 1 for this exercise.**
- **We recently created a new offer called the "Gift of *Quest*." It is now possible to purchase a one year (only) subscription to *Quest* for someone else. We will have a Web page in the *Share CLF* area and promote this in the fall.**

International Relations

- **Now that the UUA no longer has an Office of International Relations, I find myself receiving a significantly larger number of inquiries regarding organizations, meetings, and members outside the US. I now consider tracking down this sort of information part of my job.**

Quest Publication Management

- **It is my job as publication manager to produce a monthly calendar/schedule of where we are and should be with the 3 *Quest* issues that are always in the pipeline, reminding the Editor and other team members what they should be reading, writing, and editing at any particular time. With a good kick from our intern minister, I have moved this process to one that is entirely electronic, with automated reminders going out to the team. We are just now at the point, after several months of iterations, where this electronic process is helping eliminate confusion over responsibilities and helping us deliver according to our deadlines.**
- **My next task is to learn the process we use to record for podcasting. With the impending change of interns, it's important that we have redundancy in this knowledge base.**

Statement Mailings

- **I am currently working to get smarter on the subject of generating statement mailings so that I can not only take over this job from our busy executive director but also document these processes.**

Report to the Board
 April 2006
 Beth Murray

We are indeed a church without walls, and I've got the mail to prove it!
Since September 2005, this list will give you an idea of the volume of mail I send out of this office:

- 63 books
- 02 audio tapes (now being phased out of the library)
- 09 CDs
- 19 videos
- 191 New Member packets mailed (each packet weighs 1.25 lbs.!)
 - Month of Sundays are now offered online, or sent as email attachments

- 78 packages of Note Cards
- 155 packages of Order of Service Covers

Since last September, 16 groups have either joined Church on Loan for the first time, or renewed their membership. Starting last August, regular emails (at least once each month) are sent alerting the COL contacts explaining what's new at CLF, or reminding the COL contacts of the resources their membership allows them to access.

Since last September, four Second Offering packages have been sent to names generated by board members.

33 individuals are receiving RE Express, a monthly email filled with religious education resources.

In the world of advertising, we are getting the word out about CLF – what we are, and what we have to offer:

Flyers for Congregational Mailings	
2005/10/03	Luggage straps
2005/10/27	OnLine Resources, Newly designed Note Cards & Order of Service Covers
2005/12/05	RE Express
2006/01/10	Online Classes
2006/02/06	Jewelry, note cards, gifts for volunteers
2006/03/04	Bridging young adults -- CYF membership
2006/04/12	Gifts for mothers: Gift of Quest; Trial

Young Adult News	
2006/02/20	Online Classes
2006/03/20	Podcast
2006/04/20	Jewelry, note

UU Faith Works	
2005/11/15	RE Testimonial about CLF

Information generated for Interconnections:	
2005/10/03	Luggage straps

LREDA:	
2006/03/15	RE Express & Lvnn's poster on

Emails for News You Can Use	
2005/11/09	New staff at CLF
2005/12/09	Note Cards
2006/01/06	Wintry Note Cards
2006/02/03	Online Classes
2006/03/03	RE Express
2006/04/03	Prison Pen Pal?

UU World	
2006/03/13	CLF Business Card

UNIFIER	
2006/02/01	RE Express
2006/05/01	Trial Membership?

Ministerial Intern Report
To the Board of Directors of the Church of the Larger Fellowship
Paul Sprecher
3/24/2006

Since our last meeting in Boston, I have learned a great deal, suffered very little, and on the whole had a lot of fun. It's not quite retirement, but it certainly has been different than Wall Street. On a personal level, I am in the final stages of deciding which of several opportunities for ministry next year to accept. I am delighted that the choices would permit Deedee & me to remain in Boston, where we have become very fond of living. I will be able to announce my plans for next year at our meeting.

Aside from the general round of work expected of all interns, including membership on the Quest editorial team, responding to letters and calls from members, monitoring the CLF-L list, creating worship materials for our Month of Sundays program, and generally helping out and filling in wherever needed, I have also done work in the following areas:

Teaching: I am in the middle of teaching the second offering of an online 8-week course called "Reading the Bible with UU Eyes." The course is evenly divided between the two testaments, and I have made reading assignments, written background and transition material, and moderated forums in which I pose 3 questions per session and moderate and respond to replies. This experience has enabled me to become acquainted with our Moodle online learning software. I have learned the origin of the acronym (Martin's Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment, a definition mostly useful to programmers and education theorists—and yes, it should be capitalized as an acronym, but it isn't!) as well as being able to assist new teachers in understanding how the software works and how they can best apply it to their courses. Having taught 7th & 8th graders for 10 years as well as adult and children's RE, I must say that online learning software has come a long way and I think we have an excellent product for offering distance learning.

Social Justice: I felt a need to figure out ways to add social justice in a more intentional fashion to some of my own work, and as a result posted invitations to members to consider signing up for a UUSC JustWorks Camp at the Lakota Reservation this coming August. A number of members have made inquiries to UUSC and we hope at least a few individual or families will be able to get together there. This might be an opportunity to expand next year.

I also felt that we should try to address a particular social justice topic and therefore created a course/workshop using the online learning software to stimulate discussion about the struggle for a Living Wage which was centered around Martin Luther King Day. Resources were provided and at the end I posted the sermon on the topic I gave at Arlington Street on Martin Luther King Sunday. I learned that such an effort needs to begin much sooner and extend much longer, and that I should have provided my sermon about two weeks in advance, but enrollment of over 20 members and some interesting interchanges illustrated that this approach has some appeal and became the basis for the new Discussion Group which I recently launched.

Technology: While I have left my full time career in technology, one of my internship goals has been to determine how technology can be used effectively as an adjunct to our ministry. I dusted off some of my old programming skills to work with Toby Rzepka to create the podcasting programs which have enabled us to go live to the world with the March issue of Quest. We are finalizing the instructions to contributors and our successors in broadcasting the podcast to ensure that the program will continue when we are gone, and we are now listed in the Apple iTunes Music Store as well as any denominational directories we've been able to identify.

My reading of CLF-L made clear that the variety of styles in which our members want to "do church" requires additional outlets for electronic interchange. At some 325 members, the list inevitably creates clashes among members. Some want CLF-L to be a gentle place, others believe that truth is found through inquiry or even debate. The fact that our bulletin board project was hacked made it apparent that we needed to treat our electronic assets carefully to protect the reputation of the church and the safety of our members. The Living Wage Workshop was an experiment on my part to determine

if we might be able to use the Moodle online learning software to provide an environment which would approximate the "online meeting rooms" that some of the users on the list had been requesting as a solution to the varying expectations of life on the list. Just a week ago created a new Discussion Group as a "course" with 6 topics in UU history, theology, and social justice. In response to the request of a member I added a 7th entitled "Living the Journey," a gentle forum for CLFers who want to share discussions of questions like "This is where I am right now." "This is what I read today and it meant something to me." "I did this today and I'm not sure I did right, what do you think?" I'm delighted to report that we have over 30 users in the first week and that some interesting and lively conversations have already gotten started. I hope and expect this can serve as a safe but challenging set of "meeting rooms" to fit a variety of styles and needs for communication among members.

History and Second Offering: I spent a number of days in the Harvard Divinity School's Andover-Harvard Library archives collecting materials about the history of the CLF and the Extension Department in support of Amber Beland's project to contact congregations celebrating the 50th anniversary of their founding and encourage them to help support the kind of work that got them started. The fact that her congregation in Annapolis, MD as well as the Westport congregation are among such churches is evidence that wonderful churches can emerge with our support from the work we do. I have unfortunately not been able to give the attention I should have to this project, and I think it may require some support additional to what Amber and I have been able to provide. I *am* proud to report that my home congregation in Ridgewood, NJ, has agreed to take a second offering for CLF and even more proud to report that Denny will be preaching at that service.

Report to CLF Board (April 2006) from Rev. Patty Franz

I'm grateful for this opportunity to introduce myself and my work (since January '06) as the new director of ministries for CLF's incarcerated members.

While I was in seminary, I served as a chaplain intern at two county jails for almost two years. My work in the jails was difficult and challenging, and I loved it! I was also happy to preach at 20+ UU congregations in the Pacific Central District about my jail ministry and its connection to our UU principles and values. I returned to 'detention ministry' in August 2004, when CLF invited me to succeed Rev. Anne Hines as volunteer chaplain-by-mail for our prisoner-members. During my 17 months in that role, I replied to more than 100 letters from 30+ prisoners. This volunteer service re-awakened my passion for prison ministry, as I found myself bubbling over with ideas that could help make CLF's prison ministry more effective for both its prisoner members and for 'free-world' UUs in CLF and other UU congregations.

So I was delighted to begin serving this year as director of ministries for CLF's prisoner members. A main focus of my work since January has been our penpal program. I've been checking on the 118 matches on Rev. Kathy Reis' penpal list, and was sad (but not surprised) to find that at least half of them had in fact ended long ago. But it's good to know that we really do have 50 active matches, and in many of these, both penpals are finding their correspondence interesting, educational, and satisfying. I also found a dozen free-world penpals whose prior matches ended but who are willing to be re-matched, and a file of emails from UU's who've expressed interest in our penpal program, whom I'm contacting for follow-up. We have also rewritten the program's Guidelines to make them more clear and informative and to highlight CLF's ongoing availability for advice and support, and plan to make better use of our 'e-list' to offer support/encouragement to our free-world participants.

**It's important to remember that prisoners have no web access to our on-line resources! We're now mailing inquiry and new-member packets that better reflect our prisoner-members' circumstances, and I am committed to finding ways to make more of our UU resources available to prisoners on-paper through the mail. A main focus for my work later this year will be to re-work some of our religious education offerings so that they can be made available to our prisoner-members (and to our other CLF members without web-access) as "correspondence" courses... As you can tell, I'm full of both ideas and enthusiasm for this important and valuable ministry! I'm still concerned that the funding for this position (6 hours/week and \$6K/year) is the same as it was when CLF had 60 prisoner-members, even though our number of prisoner-members has almost quadrupled, and prisoners are finding it harder than ever to access chaplains, churches, and spiritual support that offer any alternative to traditional/conservative Christian theologies...
~ Rev. Patty Franz**