

Report from the Intern Minister

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I am nearing the official conclusion of my internship with the Church of the Larger Fellowship. It began on 1 Oct 2009 and will end on 31 Mar 2010. While it may have been a short internship, it has been very full. As is common with CLF internships, I worked ¼ time at Arlington Street Church.

Rev. Jane Rzepka was my primary supervisor, and Rev. Kim Crawford-Harvie was my alternate supervisor. My experience with both supervisors was wonderful and very educational. The combination of Arlington Street Church and the Church of the Larger Fellowship is a great internship experience.

The main project of my internship was to develop an adult education program, deliverable on line, that would allow congregations who so desire, to become more inviting to military people and their families.

A prototype of the program was presented at the UU Church of Birmingham – at their request. David Pyle, another UU military chaplain candidate got the initial invitation. After explaining the CLF project to UUCB, they invited me as well. The experience in Birmingham was integrated into what we were referring to simply as “the product.”

The program took shape and found a name – it became the Unitarian Universalist Bridge Builder Kit. With input and review from four other military chaplains/candidates the Bridge Builder Kit expanded to three presentations and a worship service. It was subsequently field tested at Arlington Street Church, The UU Church of Central Nassau, and Community Church of New York. I expect the Bridge Builder Kit to be complete and available in the next two weeks.

My connections with both Unitarian Universalism and the Marine Corps have led to other opportunities as well. I was invited to be a chaplaincy panelist at Harvard Divinity School – representing military chaplaincy. I was also asked to co-lead an adult RE program – a discussion of president Barak Obama’s Nobel prize speech – at Arlington Street Church.

Activity on the military ministry website has remained similar to how it was prior to internship. About 100 people have created profiles on the site. About 20 regularly visit the site passively, and about ten are regular participants. While the site does not have a high, steady level of participation, the site seems quite important to those who do participate. About once a month or so, someone will post a question or statement that reveals the importance of this ministry. As with many other aspects of the CLF, a key component to this ministry is allowing people to feel “connected.” The military ministry website has been a place where chaplains, deployed service people, marginalized UUs, and concerned parents have all shared from the heart.

On a non-military topic, my internship included an adult spiritual reflection experience on the CLF's on-line forums. The CLF has been a leader in technology-based ministry. The Photo-Reflections forum was an exploration of how to combine visual imagery with personal connection as a way of maintaining the important element of person-to-person contact through technology based ministry. A visual meditation of the forum's images should soon be available on the CLF website.

As with many interns, much of my time and effort were dedicated to meeting our association's milestones in ministerial preparation. I had a successful meeting with the MFC in December 2009. I am currently working on the additional mountains of paperwork required by the Navy for application to chaplaincy.

While in Boston I have been able to take advantage of many of the great things the city has to offer. And I am eagerly awaiting an activity I haven't yet been able to try - the wind on the Charles River looks great and I am anxious to go sailing. Here are a few valuable things Boston has offered while I was here as an intern.

Cambridge Center for Adult Education
Boston Language Institute.
Andover Newton Theological School

White People Challenging Racism
Continued Arabic studies
Unitarian Universalist anti-oppression/anti-racism/multi-culturalism training.

In conclusion, this internship has been more than I could have hoped for – crammed into too short a time. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at both the CLF and ASC. The staff here at the CLF is a finely tuned machine that always reserves some of its energy for creativity and thinking out of the box. I am very grateful for all of the support I have been given as a service person and as a minister to service people. My internship at the CLF has helped clarify ways that UUs and military people can converse constructively around the difficult topics of war and peace. Having been a member and now staff at the CLF, I am thoroughly impressed with how this congregation functions and with what it offers Unitarian Universalism as a whole.