

# Your UUCPA Update and Sabbatical Guide

December 2009 – August 2010



**Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto**  
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Dear Friends,

This is an exciting year at UUCPA. Here are some of the highlights.

Preparation is complete for Reverend Amy Zucker Morgenstern's sabbatical – beginning Dec 25. We look forward to her return to the pulpit in August.

Welcome to Rev. Dan Harper, our new Minister of Religious Education who joined us this Fall.

Welcome to Reverend Sean Dennison, who will join us December 15 on a half time basis. Rev. Sean will be in the pulpit twice a month and will be serving our pastoral needs during Amy's sabbatical.

We also welcome many inspiring UU guest ministers to our pulpit — a season of “don't miss” worship services is coming this Spring.

There is new UU music in our worship, from our new “Singing the Journey” hymnals.

Second Sunday Lunches at noon are delicious and are feeding our appetite for community.

Plans for a UUCPA youth service trip this summer are underway.

A series of workshops on different styles of meditative chant will be held at UUCPA this Spring, as one part of exploring options for a third worship service.

Join us! We look forward to seeing you at UUCPA as this exciting year continues.

Warmly, Your Sabbatical Committee:

Edie Keating, Edith Jacobi, Fred Buelow, Jeff Cashdollar

**A message from the Rev. Amy Morgenstern**

Dear UUCPA folks,

A sabbatical is intended to benefit the congregation by making the minister a better minister. I have long observed that I do my best ministry to you when I am drawing on the inner wells that are the sources of my inspiration.

One way I do this is by making art. However, I have not had a regular practice of spending time on art since college, and the time is past due that I got back to this essential part of my spiritual, intellectual, and emotional life. So for the 5 ½ months of my sabbatical, I will be living the life of an artist, working on various pieces I've jotted down in sketchbooks over the last few years. A second goal is to establish a regular art practice that I can continue when church is once again my full-time occupation. I also think it's important to do things one is afraid of, and since I'm afraid of drawing, I'll take a drawing class. We'll be living in Mexico for at least a few months, and I also hope to improve my novice Spanish and be challenged by life in a different culture.

One of the great things about picking up a piece of charcoal (or a lump of clay) and following an image into new meanings, ideas, connections and feelings is the way it leads me into surprising places, so I can't predict exactly what benefits you will see. I just know that when I let my spirit drink from this spring, wonderful things burst into bloom. It will be a joy to share them with you when I return in August.

I can't thank you enough for this gift of time. I will miss you very much. I hope you will thrive during this time as well. Knowing the fine leadership you have in Dan Harper, Sean Dennison, the staff, Kathy Parmentier, and the rest of our lay leaders, and knowing as well what a loving and creative spirit pervades this congregation, I am confident that you will.

Blessings,

Amy

**A Word from our Sabbatical Minister, Rev Sean Dennison**

It seems to me that we are about to embark on an adventure. For the next six months, we'll be engaging in ministry together as Rev. Amy is on sabbatical. I am looking forward to getting to know you and to sharing the life of your congregation as we explore together. My primary responsibilities are leading worship twice a month and being available for pastoral care and conversation while Amy is away.

I'm learning fast about the wonderful things you have going on at UUCPA and am excited to watch what unfolds as we walk and work together for this next little while. I look forward to working with the rest of your ministry team and staff (who will undoubtedly help keep us on track.) We'll get to know each other, maybe catch sight of some beautiful views, and learn a lot as this adventure unfolds.

In Faith,  
Rev. Sean



### **Why a sabbatical?**

The sabbatical leave is a tradition in Unitarian Universalist congregations, as it is for universities, and even in many Silicon Valley high tech corporations. It recognizes that effective ministry requires occasional extended periods for study, reflection, rest, and renewal. A sabbatical leave is part of our congregation's covenant agreement with our ministers.

We trust that our own ministry to one another, already strong, will flourish during this time under our sabbatical minister's leadership, while our horizons will be broadened by a rich array of visiting speakers. Just as importantly, the congregation will benefit by Amy's returning with renewed energy, ideas, and depth.

### **How will we stay in touch with Amy?**

The sabbatical is a time for Amy to have a complete break from her ministerial duties. The ministers, staff, and lay leadership of the congregation are prepared to deal with all the usual matters of congregational life, including most emergencies.

Therefore, only the president, the ministers, and the church administrator will have emergency contact information for Amy. Also, because it would be impossible to catch up with several months' accumulation of correspondence, Amy will shut down email delivery and asks anyone who has a report that she will need to see upon her return to keep it on file and share it with her during a post-sabbatical debriefing.

### **What is the Board doing?**

This year the Board is looking forward to what UUCPA could be in 10 years. To begin this process, we brought Alice Mann, a consultant on church vitality, to meet with UUCPA members in October. Alice gave us a structure for long-range planning which begins with several sets of data collection as preparation for creating a long-range plan. The Board has been working through these at its monthly meetings.

Another part of our work will be research into different ways that ministers in mid-sized congregations relate to staff and leadership. We will then work with Amy when she returns in order to evaluate roles, responsibilities, authority and reporting structures. Dan Harper brings us experience and perspective from his work in many different churches. Sean Dennison may also have suggestions for us to explore. Our aim is to organize the church professional and volunteer leadership into an effective team to meet the challenges of the future.

Alice Mann suggested that we are a small mid-size church and we would gain some stability if we could grow moderately. The Board will be looking at a number of different ways that we might modify or expand our programs to better serve people who have not yet joined us. By the time that Amy returns, we should have a draft long-range plan, a structure of staff and volunteer leadership that we will want to discuss, and an energetic and vital congregation eager to work toward a vision of the future.

Our work to transform ourselves, each other, and the world, continues.

Kathy Parmentier  
Board President

## What's going on in Children and Youth Religious Education?

During Amy's sabbatical, religious education programs for children and youth will continue under the direction of Rev. Dan Harper, Assistant minister of religious education, and the Children and Youth Religious Education (C/YRE) Committee. This year, the religious education programs for children and youth are focusing on four big educational goals:

1. to raise sensitive, moral, joyful children with intellectual integrity and spiritual insight, who we hope will continue as Unitarian Universalists when they are adults;
2. to inculcate the basic religious literacy that should be the norm in our Western culture;
3. to teach basic religious skills like public speaking, meditation and/or prayer, basic leadership, singing, etc.;
4. to build community and have fun.

Every Sunday, children attend the first fifteen minutes of the worship service with their parents or guardians. We have Sunday school during both worship services. At 9:30, we have Sunday school for the following age groupings: preschool; grades K-1, 2-3, 4-5, and 6-8. At 11:00, we have one Sunday school group for grades 1-8, and we also have the Senior High Youth Group (SHYG). Parents/guardians can participate in two monthly support groups that take place on Sunday mornings: Parent Journey, and Wellness Journey. Children can join the Children's Choir, which rehearses between the two worship services, and which sings 4-5 times a year in worship services.

Beyond Sunday morning, this year UUCPA is sponsoring two programs for young people. On Sunday evening, young adolescents in grades 7-9 can participate in the "Our Whole Lives" comprehensive sexuality education program. In June, high-school aged youth can participate in a service trip to New Orleans, to help with the ongoing rebuilding effort in the Gulf Coast region.

## Whom do I call with sabbatical questions, concerns, or suggestions?

The Sabbatical Committee welcomes your input. We are Fred Buelow and Edie Keating, Board members, and Edith Jacobi, Committee on Ministry member. Please contact us with any comments, questions or concerns regarding UUCPA's arrangements to continue being a strong and supportive community while Amy is on Sabbatical. The committee can be reached at [sabbatical@uucpa.org](mailto:sabbatical@uucpa.org)

The UUCPA Office is our connection hub. Jeff, our Congregational Administrator or Debra his assistant will be glad to help. Contact the staff during office hours (9:00 – 2:30 Mon. thru Fri) by phone at 494-0541. An answering machine is on when the office is closed. Or, email a question to the office using [uucpa@uucpa.org](mailto:uucpa@uucpa.org)

The Board of Trustees and the Committee on Ministry are always interested in hearing from you. They can be reached at [Board@uucpa.org](mailto:Board@uucpa.org) and [Committee-on-ministry@uucpa.org](mailto:Committee-on-ministry@uucpa.org) respectively.

The office can also help you get in touch UUCPA friends and members; call and ask if you need a phone number or email. You can also pick up a church directory in the church office - either during the week or on Sunday mornings. A new version is printed every month - so please come get a new copy of the directory if yours is getting out of date.

What if there is a problem at church after office hours? (A room is locked or the bathroom is flooding....) Look outside the office front door, and you will see a list of emergency phone numbers. Or - take out your directory, and call board members - they will do their best to resolve the problem.

Let's all remember these words from our UUCPA Relational Covenant - "We accept responsibility for making our community everything we want it to be."

Have a question or need help? Ask! Our UUCPA community will respond.

## Sunday Services

### Pastoral Care

We are very lucky to have Sean to take charge of pastoral care during Amy's sabbatical. In this vital part of our ministry, he will have the support of Dan, and the lay pastoral caregivers of our Caring Network: Phyllis Cassel, Nancy Jensen, Ila Keiper, Sara Newcomb, and Sylvia Whitcher. The Memorial Committee, the organizers of the Baby Café and Get Better Bistro, administrative staff Jeff Cashdollar and Debra Heinz, and the many others who assist with our pastoral needs will continue to do so, in coordination with Sean. If you or someone you know needs a visit or concrete support, please email [caring@uucpa.org](mailto:caring@uucpa.org) or contact Sean at (650) 494-0541 x26 or [revsean@uucpa.org](mailto:revsean@uucpa.org)

### For Pastoral Emergencies

As always, call the church phone (650) 494-0541 x25. This will automatically forward to Amy or Dan, and during Amy's sabbatical it will forward to Sean or Dan who share coverage of this emergency line. But please remember that this line is for emergencies.

### Rites of Passage

Sean will officiate at memorial services of UUCPA members and give counsel and comfort to grieving families.

Dan will lead the dedications of children in our Easter services, April 4, 2010, and Sean will lead New Member Welcome ceremonies once in winter and once in spring.

Should anyone plan to marry in the church during the sabbatical, and should non-members wish one of our ministers to preside over a memorial service, they may request the services of either. The church administrative staff also has the names of other Unitarian Universalist ministers in the area who can provide these services.

Sunday services will be led by our sabbatical minister, the Rev. Sean Dennison, twice a month. We will also welcome leaders in liberal religion as guests in the pulpit, including our Community Minister the Rev. Scotty McLennan, Dean of Religious Life at Stanford. Sean's time with us ends when the sabbatical proper ends in mid-June. During much of the summer, Amy and Dan will be taking their annual vacation and study leave. As usual during the summer, the Pulpit Committee will plan a schedule of speakers.

Dec 27	The Magi	Rev. Roger Jones
Jan 3	TBA	
Jan 10	The Integrity of the In-Between	Rev. Sean Dennison
Jan 17	This Blue Bowl	Rev. Sean Dennison
Jan 24	Five Dollars is Five Dollars	Rev. Greg Ward
Jan 31	TBA	
Feb 7	It Matters Most What We Love	Rev. Sean Dennison
Feb 14	The Female Wisdom of God	Rev. Scotty McLennan
Feb 21	Reasonable Love	Rev. Sean Dennison
Feb 28		Rev. Greg Stewart
Mar 7	The Permanent and Transient in UU	Rev. Sean Dennison
Mar 14		Revs. Bill & Barbara Hamilton-Holway
Mar 21	We Come from the Fire	Rev. Sean Dennison
Mar 28	Reconciliation	Rev. Chester McCall
Apr 4	We Are Children of the Earth	Rev. Sean Dennison
Apr 11		Senior High Youth Group
Apr 18	Walking and the Earth	Sven Thesen
Apr 25	We Are Called	Rev. Sean Dennison
May 2	Religion and spirituality in the 21st century	Rev. Scotty McLennan
May 9	Flower Communion	Rev. Sean Dennison & Rev. Harper
May 16	On Heaven	Rev. Dan Harper
May 23	Children/Youth Religious Education Celebration	Rev. Harper & C/YRE
May 30	From Experts to Explorers	Rev. Sean Dennison
Jun 6	TBA	
Jun 13	Trusting in Mystery	Rev. Sean Dennison

Summer services, at 10:30 only, resume June 20. Amy will be back in the pulpit August 22.

## Convenient Contacts

### **Ministers**

Amy Zucker Morgenstern – Parish Minister on Sabbatical

Dan Harper – Assistant Minister of Religious Education  
[reminister@uucpa.org](mailto:reminister@uucpa.org)

Sean Dennison – Sabbatical Minister [revsean@uucpa.org](mailto:revsean@uucpa.org)

Scotty McLennan – Community Minister @ Stanford  
[McLennan@stanford.edu](mailto:McLennan@stanford.edu)

### **Board of Trustees** [Board@uucpa.org](mailto:Board@uucpa.org)

Kathy Parmentier – President

Don Brenneis – VP Finance

John Pierce – VP Facilities

Kay Pauling – Secretary

Fred Buelow – Treasurer

Susan Plass – Administration

Edie Keating – Membership

Susan Owicki – Adult Program

Richard Cassel – Youth Program

Laura Coleman – Children’s Religious Education

Nancy Neff – Social Justice

Wynne Furth – Minister Transition(s)

### **Committee on Ministry** [Committee-on-ministry@uucpa.org](mailto:Committee-on-ministry@uucpa.org)

Tom Thomas (chair)

Richard Heydt

Lynn Grant

Stefania Butler

David Chen

Edith Jacobi