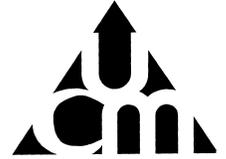


Off Court Street



the newsletter of **ucm: center for spiritual growth & social justice**
at ohio university

• April 2006

FINDING EACH OTHER...FINDING OUR VOICE

an interfaith and ecumenical mini-conference for progressive people of faith

SATURDAY, APRIL 29

Last call for registration - we've extended the deadline until April 14! This conference has generated tremendous enthusiasm all around the state, and we expect a great turnout. So get your registration in now to guarantee your spot for this great opportunity for inspiration and connection! Fee: \$15-\$25 on a sliding scale, dinner included; make checks payable to UCM. Contact Melissa at ucmcf@frognet.net or 740.593.7301.

Please join us for a very special event...

VEGAN ADVENTURE

VEGAN CUISINE MADE WITH SEASONAL INGREDIENTS
BY ACME CO-OP, FEATURING NICK POLIZZI
ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT UCM

Friday, May 5, at 5:30 p.m.

SOUP COURSE
SALAD COURSE:
MIXED WILD GREEN SALAD WITH DANDELION FRITTERS
ENTRÉE:
HERB POLENTA LAYERED WITH DUXELLES, SERVED WITH
A PUTTANESCA SAUCE AND SEASONAL VEGETABLES
DESSERT: SOMETHING DELICIOUS

\$25-\$50 ON A SLIDING SCALE
STUDENT/SENIOR/LOW-INCOME RATE: \$15
FOR RESERVATIONS: UCM@FROGNET.NET OR 593.7301

APRIL 29 CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

1:00-3:00 PM
Keynote Address, Scripps Aud
3:00-3:30 PM
Street Theater, Baker Ctr Steps
3:30-4:15 PM
Networking, Baker Center
4:15-6:00 PM
Panel Discussion, Baker Ctr 1804
6:00 PM
Dinner/Entertainment, Baker Ctr

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: RON BUFORD

African-American, openly-gay
business professional and activist;
architect of *God Is Still Speaking*
campaign to identify UCC
as open and inclusive.

INTERFAITH PANEL KAREN DABDOUB

Council on American-Islamic Rel.
REV. JAN GRIESINGER
United Church of Christ
KATY HEINS
Let Justice Roll
**DR. TARUNJIT
SINGH BUTALIA**
National Interfaith Committee of
the World Sikh Council
ERIC WILLIAMS
We Believe

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UCM CALENDAR:

SUNDAYS...

INTO-WORSHIP - worship service and potluck dinner, every other week, 5:30 pm ➤

MONDAYS...

SOUP FOR THE SOUL: ACTIVIST HEAVEN - WHAT DOES YOURS LOOK LIKE? discussion series, 6 weeks, Apr 17 - May 22, noon ➤

WEDNESDAYS...

A GIRLFRIEND'S GUIDE TO ACTIVISM - monthly discussion series, open to all Girlfriends and Guyfriends and everyone in between... 6:00-7:30 pm, UCM Lounge
4/26 • Dr. Prisca Nemapare, former OU faculty & founder of the Zienzele Foundation
5/31 • Dana Brown, recently protested at U.S. detention facility in Guantanamo Bay and attended World Social Forum in Venezuela

THURSDAYS...

THURSDAY SUPPER - a weekly free meal open to all, no questions asked, 5:30 pm

APRIL 29

FINDING EACH OTHER... FINDING OUR VOICE - UCM Spiritual Activism Mini-Conference - *Last call for registration, deadline extended to April 14*

MAY 5

VEGAN ADVENTURE - dinner prepared by ACME Co-op to benefit UCM, 5:30pm

MAY 13

FAIR TRADE DAY ➤ Howard Hall site across from Baker Center, 2:00-5:00 pm

JUNE 2

UCM SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARDS - details TBA

NOVEMBER 3

24TH ANNUAL DINNER & BENEFIT AUCTION

UCM PROGRAMS:

INTO-WORSHIP

UCM's **Interfaith Nontraditional Time Of Worship** offers an intimate, participatory approach to celebrating our different faiths and our common humanity. The service takes place every other **Sunday at 5:30 pm** in the **UCM Lounge**; afterwards, enjoy a potluck dinner downstairs. On the Sundays we're not worshipping, we'll meet at the same time to plan the next service. INTO-Worship will go on hiatus after June 4 and resume again in September.

- ✚ **Sundays:** Open to students and community members
- **Worship Service:** April 30, May 14 and 28
- **Planning Session:** April 23, May 7 and 21, June 4

SOUP FOR THE SOUL: ACTIVIST HEAVEN...

For each week during spring quarter's **Soup for the Soul** lunchtime discussion series, **Activist Heaven - What Does Yours Look Like?**, we've invited a local community or student activist to relate images of an ideal future - a personal "Activist Heaven." Presenters will talk about the motivations and inspirations that energize them and guide their efforts: their faith, their hopes and goals. What pulls them up when they become discouraged? What drives them to keep on struggling for change?

What does your Activist Heaven look like? Come and share it with us and hear others speak about theirs during this six-week series. Open to everyone; free light soup lunch. Please call ahead if you're bringing a large group. **Mondays, noon - 1:00 pm, downstairs at UCM.**

✚ GUEST SPEAKERS:

- April 17:** Christie Truly, Appalachian Peace & Justice Network
- April 24:** Alyssa Jerzyk, Planned Parenthood of SE Ohio
- May 1:** Jeremy Bowman, Crumbs Bakery
- May 8:** Constantine Faller, Athens' Own
- May 15:** TBA
- May 22:** TBA

FAIR TRADE DAY

On **Saturday, May 13**, UCM will co-sponsor a festival to celebrate International Fair Trade Day, from **2:00 - 5:00 p.m.** at the **Howard Hall site** across from Baker Center. Guest speakers will be featured and local fair trade vendors will offer tastings of fair trade coffee and chocolate. Mmmmm, chocolate. Co-sponsors include: Athens Own/Dawn Chorus Coffee, Bali Karma, Circle of Friends, Donkey Coffee & Espresso, Village Bakery & Café, and Good Works, Inc.



A GIRLFRIEND'S GUIDE TO ACTIVISM

UCM's popular monthly discussion series, **A Girlfriend's Guide to Activism**, which debuted at the top of the charts in January, will continue to inspire future activists this quarter. The series has seen the UCM lounge packed with students and community members eager to learn of the struggles and successes of area women who have devoted their lives to activism.

Read the rest of this story on page 4...

EXPLORING LGBT SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

The LGBT Programs Center's continuing series, "Gays & Gods: Exploring LGBT Spirituality," will feature several LGBT folks sharing their spiritual journeys. You're invited to listen and discuss on Tuesday, April 11, from 7:30-9:00 p.m. in the Baker Center 1804 Lounge.

CALLIOPE FEMINIST CHOIR 4TH ANNUAL CONCERT

Enjoy beautiful a cappella music, blending challenging content and harmonious melodies, at the Calliope Feminist Choir 4th Annual Concert on Sunday, April 23, 4:00 pm, at Stuart's Opera House in Nelsonville. A reception in the lobby will follow.

Calliope Feminist Choir is a group of nearly forty women committed to sharing music that reflects feminist values and highlights the beauty of women's voices. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Nancy Pierce, Calliope performs music that honors and promotes justice, peace, equality and right relationship with the earth.

This year's concert continues in traditional fashion with a selection bound to please and provoke. Pieces will range from sweet and familiar "Cradle Songs" to Holly Near's provocative "I Ain't Afraid." Not to be missed, this concert will undoubtedly offer another outstanding and meaningful musical experience.

 *Tickets: \$10-\$25 on a sliding scale. Call 593-3410, obtain from any Calliope member, or call Stuart's, 753-1924.*

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

Take Back the Night events will be held during the first week in May, including the **Take Back the Night March at sundown on Thursday, May 4**. If you would like more information or want to get involved, contact Elaine Kaylor, Women's Affairs Commissioner, OU Student Senate, at ek404203@ohio.edu or 937-545-4185.

MAY 15 - 17

"THE NAMES PROJECT" THE AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT

The NAMES Project: The AIDS Memorial Quilt, dedicated to those who have lost their lives to AIDS, will be on display from **May 15 - 17** in **Baker Center Ballroom**. The exhibit, sponsored by OU's Department of Health Education and Wellness, will be open from **10:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.** each day. Admission is free, but donations for the Athens AIDS Task Force will be accepted.

The NAMES Project began in 1987 and is now the largest ongoing community arts project in the world. Over 15 million people have visited the Quilt at thousands of displays worldwide. Through such displays, the NAMES Project Foundation has raised over \$3 million for AIDS service organizations throughout North America. Currently, the AIDS Quilt has more than 46,000 individual 3-by-6-foot memorial panels, each one commemorating the life of someone who has died of AIDS.

AREA EVENTS:

MONDAYS...

PEACE VIGIL - 11:30-12:30, Athens County Courthouse

PEOPLE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE - bi-weekly meeting, 4:30 - 6:00 pm, at UCM

OUT & ABOUT: THE COMING OUT GROUP -share & learn in a safe & confidential space, 7:00-9:00 pm, South Pole, garage level of Nelson Commons; contact Mickey Hart, LGBT Programs Center, 593-0239, hartm@ohio.edu

WEDNESDAYS...

ATHENS FRIENDS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS [AFIS] COFFEE HOUR - 11:30 am - 12:30 pm, Voight Hall Lobby, Contact: Jane Palmer, 597-1567, palmerj@ohio.edu

OPEN DOORS - weekly meeting (while OU is in session), open to all, 8:00-10:00 pm, at UCM

APRIL 11

GAYS & GODS: EXPLORING LGBT SPIRITUALITY - 7:30-9:00 pm, 1804 Lounge in Baker Center

APRIL 12-19

PRIDE WEEK - various events; contact LGBT Programs Center for details

APRIL 23

CALLIOPE FEMINIST CHOIR SPRING CONCERT - 4:00 pm, Stuart's Opera House

MAY 4

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT MARCH - sundown

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Emily Van Doren Bush will trade healing sessions at the Rose Cottage Wellness Center in exchange for seven hours of office/computer/marketing work per week. Contact: Emily Bush or Judy Archer, 740-448-2403

A GIRLFRIEND'S GUIDE TO ACTIVISM

by *Melissa Wales, UCM Program Director*

UCM's popular monthly discussion series, *A Girlfriend's Guide to Activism*, first introduced in January, will continue to inspire future activists this quarter, on two **Wednesdays, April 26 and May 31**. The series has seen the UCM lounge packed with students and community members eager to learn of the struggles and successes of area women who have devoted their lives to activism.

On February 22, **Carol Kuhre**, founder of Rural Action and former UCM co-director, shared the story of her years juggling peace and justice activism, raising a family, nurturing her feminist spirituality, and making time for creating beautiful works of art. She reminded us that in the midst of all the urgent, important work we engage in, we must make time and space for our families, friends and passions. Thanks for the slide show, Carol!

On March 29, **Dr. Judith Grant**, director of the OU Women's Studies Program, spoke to us about her experiences in activism on a variety of issues, including labor, anti-apartheid, third-party politics, women's rights, and animal rights. She revealed that her choice of issues was driven by the demographics and prevailing concerns wherever she was living at the time, be it rust-belt Pennsylvania, New Jersey, or southern California. Her advice to young activists is "Don't be afraid to take risks."

APRIL 26

The conversation continues on April 26 with **Dr. Prisca Nemapare**, former OU faculty member and founder and executive director of the Zienzele Foundation. Begun in 1999, Zienzele supports AIDS orphans and their caregivers in two regions in Zimbabwe. With a goal of fostering economic self-sufficiency, Zienzele pays school fees for approximately 700 orphans who otherwise would not be able to stay in school. The foundation provides training in basket-making, gardening, small animal husbandry, health and hygiene, and counseling on how to deal with the constant deaths of loved ones.

Zienzele is community-based and staffed primarily by volunteers. Their main source of income is the sale of traditional Zimbabwe baskets. Proceeds pay the basket-maker's school fees and provide them with a small income. Currently Zienzele is seeking donors who, for \$200/year, wish to sponsor one of the increasing number of Zimbabwe's child-headed households. Despite the very difficult political and economic conditions in the country, Zienzele courageously persists in accomplishing its work. For more information see <http://www.zienzele.org>.

MAY 31

A Girlfriend's Guide to Activism concludes, for this school year, on May 31 with **Dana Brown**, who has been active in a variety of causes. Recently, she protested at the US terrorist detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and attended the World Social Forum in Venezuela. *Come join us!*



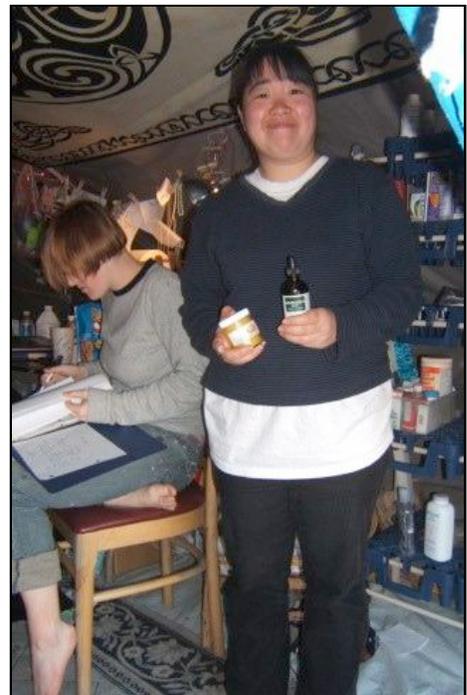
UCM ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK TRIP PHOTOS, PAGES 5 - 9

Page 5: *Kat Tildes at the Volunteer Board*

Page 6: (top l) *Liz Cooke chopping broccoli*; (lower l) *Talia Parroti, clean-up duty*; (r.) *Volunteers relax and celebrate the day's hard work*

Page 7: *Inside the huge domed tent where Emergency Communities maintains its headquarters and serves three free meals every day*

Page 9: *UCM Spiritual Growth Intern Sarah Michelson*



THIS PAGE: (l.) *UCM volunteers in St. Bernard Parish, March 24*; (r.) *Kat Tildes & Erica Yokoyama*

REFLECTIONS...

UCM ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK TRIP

A few weeks ago, UCM's annual **Alternative Spring Break Trip** sent a group of student volunteers to St. Bernard Parish in Louisiana, near New Orleans, to assist with Hurricane Katrina relief efforts; the eight-day service trip departed from Athens on March 18 and returned on March 25.

Participants, including 13 OU students and ten AmeriCorps members from the Sojourners MentorCorps in MacArthur, were UCM Interns Lindsey Daniels and Sarah Michelson, Sumie Arnold, Michael Bart, Anthony Battaglia, Jenna Bright, Liz Cooke, Isaac Hanks, Jesse Huge, Jon Kabb, Meghan McGuire, Curt Nash, Rebecca Nelson, Talia Parroti, Laura Post, Michael Simpkins, Leslie Jo Shelton, Jess Skocik, Kyle Smiddie, Kat Tildes, Drake Toney, Sarah Watson, and Erica Yokoyama.

During their stay in Louisiana, they worked at **Emergency Communities**, an independent non-profit relief organization based in the town of Arabi, serving three free meals a day to over 1,100 people, including area residents, visiting relief workers, volunteers, and anyone else in need of hot food and companionship. **Emergency Communities** is dedicated to re-establishing community connections and a sense of normalcy for the people of St. Bernard Parish.

UCM Social Work Intern **Lindsey Daniels** did an exceptionally commendable job planning, recruiting, organizing, making connections, arranging transportation, raising money, and leading the group. She deserves high praise and many thanks. Lindsey's travel journal and photographs follow, along with Reflections by Sarah Michelson and Drake Toney.

REFLECTION : LINDSEY DANIELS

When we rolled into Emergency Communities (E.C.) in Arabi, Louisiana at 2:30 Sunday morning, we immediately became aware of what type of organization E.C. is and what kind of people it's made up of. Extremely apologetic for our late arrival, I was told, "You're not sorry and you're not late," as Babs, a member of the Peace Patrol gave me a hug and then proceeded to hug the other members of our group. The Peace Patrol found accommodations for the 23 of us that night in an army tent, a carnival tent, and a teepee.

JOURNAL: SUNDAY - FRIDAY

SUNDAY'S orientation at 10a.m. was where we met several point people who showed us around E.C. and explained the different volunteer tasks. On the Volunteer Board we were able to sign up for these tasks which included, but certainly were not limited to, kitchen duty, the "dish pit," the hydration station, distribution, beautification, the rejuvenation station, and serving. Also on the Volunteer Board were special projects -mostly gutting houses. These special projects were available because the usual 40-60 volunteers at E.C. had jumped to 150-200 with so many people dedicating their spring breaks to relief efforts.

Sunday was an interesting day because the residents were celebrating St. Joseph's Day. Instead of volunteers feeding the residents, the residents were using food donated to E.C. to serve us and celebrate the holiday. We set up our tents that day on crates because the ground was toxic. Where E.C. is now located, 20 feet of water once stood.

As Sunday was an atypical day, it provided volunteers with the opportunity to really learn the layout of E.C. and walk around the neighboring area, and also time

for us to drive into the French Quarter. Headed down there, we crossed a bridge and saw the 9th Ward for the first time. The van became extremely quiet with murmurs of "Oh my gosh" and "Holy (insert expletive)."

Rows upon rows of streets were filled with demolished houses and debris. There were numbers and letters spray painted on the houses in quadrants. We found out later that these signified the date the house was checked, the group that checked the house, the number of people found alive, and the number found dead. Some houses were also spray painted with phone numbers so people could reach doctors or find other family members or missing pets. Some people left messages indicating an intention to come back.

After crossing the bridge, it was not long before we were in the French Quarter. Businesses were up and running, but one could tell the atmosphere was not the same and that certain places were struggling. The flooding was not nearly as bad there as it had been where E.C. is located and to see the difference in devastation within a few blocks was astounding.

MONDAY: Bright and early at 5:30 a.m. some of us began our first full eight-hour work day. Johnny Cash was playing in the kitchen as people prepared breakfast and made cowboy coffee. Some people from our group went out and spent several hours gutting a house, while some other folks went to move shingles and paint at a Buddhist temple. The rest of us fulfilled roles within E.C.



TUESDAY looked quite a bit like Monday, with the exception that most people stayed and worked at E.C. instead of going off-site. Meghan and Kyle became the official shower cleaners for the week, a task that the other volunteers greatly appreciated. Jenna became our trash and recycling goddess, Sarah W. became a regular at the rather demanding hydration station, Anthony was our launderer and dishwasher, and Drake was one of the best servers we had. Kat was essential for our rejuvenation and the rejuvenation of others. Michael Bart was on the Box Patrol most days and always reminded the people he served that the food was made with love. Everyone else plugged themselves in where they were most needed at the time.

During the afternoon a few of us went to walk around the 9th Ward. The devastation was tremendous. We had seen it going over the bridge on Sunday, but walking around there was an entirely different experience. We saw roofs next to other roofs and could not tell where they came from. We saw wheelchairs and personal belongings scattered across the land. There were houses on cars, cars on houses, boats in trees, and other unbelievable sights. There was not just one, or even several, destroyed houses - entire neighborhoods were demolished. Only a couple of houses looked even remotely salvageable, but very little was going on to remove the debris. Later we heard that four dead bodies were found that day. Words cannot really explain the situation; pictures can help, but only by going there and seeing it for yourself, even now, more than six months after the hurricane, can you begin to develop a really accurate understanding.



WEDNESDAY was a day of interesting off-site programs. In the morning there was a pressing need to send people off-site to prepare an area for an important press conference, so we sent some of our group to help. Then transportation back to the Buddhist temple was needed and, although no one from our group returned, we lent one of our vans out for others to use. Around lunch-time, Kyle arranged an afternoon of work for us at a ranch for abused and neglected children. About fourteen of us went to KRB Ranch where we created burnable piles of logs, branches, and sticks on the over 75 acres of land. While we worked hard, we felt we hardly made a dent.



THURSDAY was our last full day of work at E.C.. At this point the group had become really comfortable with one another and with E.C., and we were sad that over half of our group was leaving the next day. The 13 OU students had to leave on Friday, but the ten AmeriCorps people were going to stay on until Tuesday. So Thursday was a day to both maintain and say good-bye to our work niches; to hold on to, as well as pass on, the stories we had heard and made; oh, and also to have a dance-off in the serving line at lunch.

FRIDAY morning the OU faction of the group had the vans loaded by 9:00 and were headed to the French Quarter by 10:00 a.m. We had two hours to walk around, admire the architecture, spend some money at the French Market, and hang around Café Du Monde. Finally, we bid our farewells to the AmeriCorps members and the 13 of us began our journey back home. After an amazing 14-and-a-half hours, we pulled up to UCM and our group parted ways.



The Monday after my return to Athens was supposed to be business as usual, except it was not. Only through telling my experiences to those who had not been with me, did I begin to realize the profound impact the trip had on me. Thus far, I have described some of the work we did and how we bonded, but have not mentioned the stories I heard from residents of St. Bernard Parish.

One woman I spoke with lost everything in the flooding, including her husband, who drowned, and lots of friends who either drowned or became sick and died. She had been to four different shelters and was currently staying with a friend in a tent city up the road, but the government was closing that shelter at the end of the month and she did not know what she was going to do. For six months, her name has been on the waiting list for a FEMA trailer and, at the same time, on five or six different lists to have her home cleaned out.

One man I spoke with had been back in his home town of Arabi for only a week. Right after the hurricane hit he took his boat and rescued people and animals, but left because the "stench of death" was too much for him to bear. He had no place to go or to stay when he returned to Arabi because he had not known that everything would be gone and that shelters had waiting lists to take in people. He had spent his week sleeping in dumpsters

or on the toxic ground. Somehow he made his way to Emergency Communities where he discovered his nephew was a permanent volunteer. His nephew immediately secured his uncle a volunteer position, which meant he had a tent to stay in, would have three meals a day, and would have access to showers, clothing, etc...

I then began to talk more with the nephew and heard about his experiences. He told me that during the flooding people were unable to get up to their roofs from the outside because of the high water. So people were forced to break through their roofs from the inside, which many were unable to do. He was able to bust through his roof and save his mother, just in time to see his neighbor, who he called Nana, swept away. He then took his boat and went from house to house busting through roofs, mostly with his bare hands, to try and save people. His tattered and scarred hands supported his desperate story.

Another man told me he saw his wife swept away, but her body has still not been found. We were warned not to believe the spray-painted numbers on the houses. We were told that some houses had never really been checked, just spray-painted. Bodies were still being discovered, but not necessarily reported. Some residents said that the official estimate of 1,500 dead was insultingly low and that they knew the number was much, much higher.



Despite all the hardships the residents had faced and regardless of the glaringly obvious fact that mental health was not being attended to, every resident we encountered was overtly and incredibly grateful for the volunteers. Many were hesitant to move to the front of the food line because they felt we deserved to eat just as much as they did. Some expressed discomfort that we were not receiving any sort of monetary compensation. Unbelievably, many people were in high spirits and were filled with hope. Many residents joked around and believed that laughter really was the best medicine.

These are just a few of the many stories. I know for one that this trip changed my life for the better and that the people in my life mean even more to me than they did before. Talking with other people who went on the trip, I heard a strong desire to go back and some genuine sadness for leaving in the first place.

-- Lindsey Daniels

REFLECTION ON THE SPRING BREAK TRIP BY STUDENT VOLUNTEER DRAKE TONEY

Driving through the night and spending close to 19 hours together in a van, traveling from the comforts and unnecessary social drama of Athens to the destruction and the humble locale of St. Bernard Parish, proved to be a group-builder in and of itself. We traveled making jokes and small talk, we traveled in silence, we traveled together thinking about what awaited us when we reached our destination. We were anxious and ready for what we were about to meet.

What we met were two volunteers who waited up to show us our sleeping quarters for the night and to greet us after our long journey. Despite having to wait up for us and place all 23 of us somewhere, they seemed happy to do so. The people who met us were not extraordinary individuals compared to what we would experience in the rest of camp; all of the individuals at Emergency Communities were extraordinary.

The next day we found ourselves oriented by the actual point people of the camp. The people who organized all the camp's productive activities were the same people getting their hands, clothes, and bodies dirty helping the people of the area. It was amazing to see the spirits of these people who were working in an area that was 100% uninhabitable and where morale could understandably be low.

Each day was a different experience for each person, but I found all of my time well used, either serving, preparing for, or cleaning up after meals, cleaning the camp, and taking inventory, or going out into the community to work on houses. I met people who had been there for months and realized the enormity of the devastation. Six months after the disaster and there was still so much to be done. There is still so much to be done.

The group grew close through projects and ventures to the city. We got to know each other in a context that was actually quite unusual: living in a tent community with no cable, movies, barely radio, and, for the inhabitants, no Internet. There were no distractions, only time to talk and reflect and to come to the mass conclusion that something more needs to happen to get the people out of this destruction and back on their feet.

The trip, I must add, was not only an experience of working for the residents of the community, but working with them and interacting with them. Talking with the residents made the devastation hit home for me, even more than seeing the abandoned buildings and homes in the 9th Ward. Knowing that the elderly of the community had lost everything they had accumulated over their lives and the youths had lost friends and family and, really, a hope for making the community theirs, was truly the biggest and harshest realization I came to.

The trip was more than worthwhile, as is constant remembrance of the tragedy and attention to the residents and organizations striving to bring them back to some level of comfort, calm, and normalcy.

REFLECTION ON THE SPRING BREAK TRIP
BY UCM SPIRITUAL GROWTH INTERN SARAH MICHELSON

*Seven months after Katrina hit,
The land, the water and the people are still sick
Tired of waiting
wishing
wanting
hating
moping
calling
of being defeated
demoralized
dehumanized
separated
congregated for a government which won't help
They are resilient with the hope of renewed lives
They find the energy to feed their neighbors
They have rebuilt without the needed labor
They have stripped and gutted out the evil which thought could destroy everything*

*With over 1,500 reported dead
People come back home to find their families rotting
Treasures mistakenly left behind
Because they had to leave everything behind*

*People's whole lives puked up on their lawns
Like their houses couldn't stand the taste
Of the cleansed possessions soaked by the poison of Katrina*

*And you tell me that it's over, it's too late
Who will come to help you when your life is ruined
When you've seen your husband swept away by a flood of deadly water
When the gray creeps from the scalp because the beautician is lost
When you can't live in what used to be your home
When toxicity is your only residence
When you're eating every meal in a soup kitchen
When your memories are instable, inseparable and fading
And you have no objects to remind you where you've been
When those happy, colorful beads cannot touch your skin
When your daughter can't ride her bike around the neighborhood
When all that's left is a cement foundation, the top two stories gone*

*When it's gone, all you've known, gone
gone
gone
gone.*

*That will be a long seven months
Will you, can you find the hope? They did.*

*Recovery
Rebuild
Renew
Remember.*

To Serve the Spirit

by *Evan Young, UCM Spiritual Director*

As a Unitarian Universalist, one of the things I bring to UCM is a decidedly interfaith orientation to campus ministry. And as we've spent some time this year looking at such foundational documents as our articles of incorporation, our bylaws, and our mission statement, it's been clear that historically UCM has understood itself as an ecumenical Christian ministry. Which raises the question: why interfaith?

The world in the twenty-first century is small and getting smaller; and Thomas Friedman tells us it's getting flatter too—in the sense that more and more people around the globe are gaining access to information and communication technology that permits us all to compete, to connect, and to interact on an equal footing, a level playing field. In Athens this means that on any given day, each of us is more and more likely to meet and interact with people from other countries, other cultures—other faiths. And as technology pushes the boundaries of community outward, we have to figure out how to be community with the people we share this shrinking world with.

This is proving difficult in many areas, not least in religion. Because there's a very human tendency to understand humans in terms of "us" and "them," and to pay lots of attention to where and how and by whom the line gets drawn between the two. At bottom, though, to draw that line we have to think of people in terms of general characteristics of a group—which means in stereotypes. Our faith traditions, though, agree on the basic "sharedness" of our humanity; in the Abrahamic traditions we call this "being made in the image and likeness of God," and believe we all are. And what we've learned is that the most effective antidote to our tendency to define others by stereotypes is to engage in dialogue—to sit down together and to experience each other in the fullness that only comes with presence and listening.



The problem in the case of religion is that our differences seem to go to the very core: who we are, what we're supposed to do, what happens when we die. And in some sense they do; but the real problem is in that "othering" move, the one where we say "my faith tells me this truth, which is right, therefore the different truth your faith tells you must be wrong." Do you see it? We expect our truths to be exclusive, we see them in either-or terms: either I'm right or you're right.

But we live in a both-and world. We live in a world where, when I sit down with you face to face, I learn that underlying our cultural differences is our common humanity; that in your cultural context your truth claims make perfect sense; and that granting that does not diminish the importance or validity of my own truth claims. In this world my life as I live it is my faith witness, and it is as compatible with the Christian Great Commandment to love God with all one's heart and soul and mind and strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself as it is compatible with the pagan injunction against harm, or the Buddhist goal of freedom from the illusion of self, or the various ideals of a raft of other religious traditions.

Why interfaith? Because modern biology and physics teach us we're all connected, and because these different faiths exist among us, and because ultimately I (we?) believe it's not just possible, but true to our very nature, for all of us to live in community. And that's something worth believing in.

WELCOME UCM'S NEWEST INTERN!

We have a new intern this quarter, **Adrienne Conley**, a graduate student in Political Science/Women's Studies and College Student Personnel. She'll be helping out at Thursday Supper and with some of the other projects we have going on this quarter. Welcome Adrienne!

THURSDAY SUPPER THANKS

Thursday Supper Intern **Joe Buzzelli** offers his thanks to the following winter quarter volunteers: "*Ashley Ante, Trisha Lachman, Amy Roberson, The Salvation Army, Alpha Phi Omega, Pat Reddan and Christ the King University Parish, Jill Stefanaki and the OU Men's Crew Team, Leanna, Aurora, Miguel, Gabby and all of our weekly volunteers, and anyone else I forgot.*"

Many thanks also to Dr. J.W. Smith's COMS360 class and to Students for Peace & Justice for their hard work on fundraising projects in support of Thursday Supper.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP!

We'd like to express our gratitude to...

Those who contributed support for the Alternative Spring Break Trip, including:

- ✦ the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens and Roberta Roberson for co-sponsoring the Mardi Gras Party fundraiser,
- ✦ the Resident Action Council (tRAC), the Church of the Good Shepherd, Arline McCarthy, Heather Moyer & Amy Sens, Rev. Thomas Niccolls, Nancy O. Arnold, the Norman Smeerin Trust, Alice McKenny, Patricia Hefner, Marcia Hinds, Carol Goslee, B.J. Beller, and Marlene L. Miller for their financial contributions. We apologize to any whose names have been omitted.

The people who helped make the March 10 appetizer tasting benefit, "Around the World & Back Again," a successful, delicious, and fun-filled event, including:

- ✦ Lisa Trocchia & Agapi Kitchen, Francie Abdella, Abigail Akyeamong, Jim & Miriam Coady, Judith Edinger, Maria Fanis, Greg Kessler, Mary Anne Flournoy, Wendy & Judy Millesen, Nick Polizzi, Janet Polzer, Susan Roth, and Melissa Wales, for preparing and donating all the wonderful food.
- ✦ Student organizations Alpha Lambda Delta, Alpha Phi Omega, and the OU Chapter of Habitat for Humanity, for their priceless volunteer support. The event raised \$480, which will certainly help pay the bills.
- ✦ We'd like to say a very special thank-you to UCM Board Vice Chair Susan Roth for conceiving "Around the World & Back Again," this is the second year we've hosted this shindig and Susan, again, went way above and way beyond in planning, organizing, decorating, and cooking to make the party possible. We love you Susan, especially if you keep on making that decadent crême brulée!

Speaking of the UCM Board, we are constantly grateful for all their hard work and support. We, the staff, salute you! We couldn't keep UCM humming along without your help!

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