

The Flaming Chalice

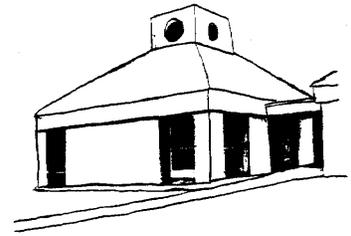
Unitarian Universalist Church of Valdosta

Located at: 1951 East Park Avenue
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2342
Valdosta, GA 31604

Minister: Rev. Fred Howard
<http://uuvaldosta.org/>

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What's going on... **September 2012**

Sun	Sept. 2	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service - "Ingathering and Water Communion Service," Rev. Fred Howard <i>Bring a small sample of water to participate in the ritual at this service.</i> Meet & Greet Coffee after the service
Th	Sept. 6	6:00 PM	Board Meeting in the RE wing
Sun	Sept. 9	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service - "Spiritual Themes in Illness and Healing," Dr. Michael Stoltzfus Meet & Greet Coffee after the service
M	Sept. 10	11:00AM	Break Bread delivery
Sat	Sept. 15	Noon-7PM	South Georgia Pride Festival <i>October newsletter deadline</i>
Sun	Sept. 16	10:45 AM 2:00 PM	Religious Education for children Service - "Beginning Again in Love," Rev. Fred Howard Meet & Greet Coffee after the service <i>Share the Plate Sunday</i> Interfaith Pride Service at UU Valdosta
F	Sept. 21	6:30 PM	Games Night at the church
Sun	Sept. 23	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service - "Viola Liuzzo," Dr. Joe Brown Meet & Greet Coffee after the service
F	Sept. 28	6:30 PM	Pizza and a Movie at the church
Sun	Sept. 30	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service - "Learning to Live in the All," Dr. Kimberly Tanner Meet & Greet Coffee after the service

September... We welcome our minister, Rev. Fred Howard, back on a regular basis this month.

Although we've seen him from time to time over the summer months, as he discusses in his monthly column, (which is back this month after a summer hiatus) he has been recharging his battery enjoying family and traveling. Welcome back Fred!! Welcome too to newcomers to our congregation, some of whom are moving into the area with new jobs this fall. In many ways we think of this time as the beginning of our church year! May it be a good one!!

Sunday Services

Sunday, September 2 – Rev. Fred Howard, “Ingathering and Water Communion Service”

Churches in our faith have a tradition of beginning the year with an Ingathering/Water Communion service. All who would like to participate in the ritual should bring a small bottle of water that represents some significant place or meaningful event from your summer travels. Tap water will do! It’s the story you tell about this special place or event that makes the ritual significant. The water will be poured into common vessel as a way of signifying our ingathering as a community. There will also be a short homily to fit the theme of this service.

Sunday, September 9 – Dr. Michael Stoltzfus, “Spiritual Themes in Illness and Healing”

We will explore interreligious spiritual themes present in the narratives of people who struggle with ongoing illness, chronic pain, or profound grief but nonetheless are able to experience healing and joy. We will explore issues associated with the notions of “wounded healers” and “vulnerable hopefulness.” Why do some spiritual narratives tend to produce guilt and blame while others tend to produce creative responses and effortful cultivation of renewal? What can we learn about spiritual experience by confronting suffering and difficulty rather than denying or ignoring illness and pain? This will be done in the spirit of open ended exploration.

Sunday, September 16 – Rev. Fred Howard, “Beginning Again in Love”

Feelings of separation, aloneness, and guilt seem to go with the human condition. Most religious traditions have some way to make us whole again, to bring about atonement, or at-one-ment with God, or (if you prefer) with the universe, or with the community. Within the Jewish observance of Yom Kippur lies perhaps the most profound understanding of the spiritual dynamic of atonement. This morning we will use this lens to examine what it means to be “at one” with God and with each other and reflect on the need for something similar within our faith tradition as well.

Share the Plate Sunday Offering: donations to the plate not designated for pledges will be used to purchase items for the “Hungry at Home” weekend back-pack food program for S.L. Mason Elementary. This program provides backpacks containing nutritious food items to send home with a child or children in a family that might not otherwise have consistent meals on the weekends. We will also collect new / gently used backpacks and non-perishable single-serving food items (items should be easy-open, i.e., pop tops, rather than a can opener needed) for the program. Bring these items to the church any time on or before the third Sunday of the month. For questions, contact Amy Wells.

Interfaith Pride Service at UU Valdosta – 2 PM

Sunday, September 23 – Dr. Joe Brown, “Viola Liuzzo”

Dr. Joe Brown, a former student affairs administrator from Valdosta State University, joins us to present the story of Viola Liuzzo. Viola Liuzzo, a Unitarian Universalist who was active in the Civil Rights Movement, was killed by member of the KKK shortly after the third of the Selma marches, on

March 24, as she was driving another civil rights marcher back to Montgomery. Dr. Brown will share her story and provide his perspective on this chapter in the civil rights movement.

Sunday, September 30 – Dr. Kimberly Tanner, "Learning to Live in the All"

Since being enamored with a quote read during the “Building your Own Theology” Adult Religious Education series, Kimberly Tanner says she has delved deeper into the life of Margaret Fuller and her personal discovery of “the all.” Join her as she shares the lessons learned thus far in her search for spiritual comfort within a liberal religious community. Kimberly Tanner is Director of Membership on our church’s Board. She is Director of the Access Office in the VSU Student Affairs Division.

Religious Education

For Children: The RE program for children under 15 years of age meets at 10:45 AM concurrent with the Sunday morning service. Older young people will remain with the adult service. Two adults are needed each Sunday to help with RE.

Interfaith Pride Service September 16 at 2 PM At UU Valdosta

In conjunction with the South Georgia Pride Festival, we will host the 3rd annual Interfaith Pride Service. Evelyn Thomas, of Sanctuary Project Veterans, will be our guest speaker. Sanctuary Project Veterans is a nondenominational ministry headquartered at Pilgrim United Church of Christ, Carlsbad, California. The project works with veterans, particularly those impacted by Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, to help them obtain medical benefits, pensions, etc. (<http://sanctuaryproject.org/>) We will also be joined by indie folk rock musician, Julie Schurr, who is one of the musicians performing at the Pride Festival on Saturday. We will invite ministers of other local churches to participate in the service. Extend an invitation to your neighbors and friends – all are welcome to join us in celebrating diversity and recognizing efforts to keep our community safe for all people. Stay afterwards for a meet-and-greet that will include desserts, light snacks, and beverages.

Intro to UUism

Rev. Fred Howard and our Director of Membership, Kimberly Tanner will be holding brief (20-30 min) "Intro to UUism" sessions after the service most Sundays when there are visitors who want to stay after Meet and Greet for such a chance to hear a brief introduction and ask questions. We will hold a more formal "All About UUism" class later in the fall. Watch for the specifics in later announcements.

INVITATION TO MEMBERSHIP

If you are interested in becoming a member of our fellowship, we encourage you to talk with our minister, Rev. Fred Howard or our President, Carol Stiles, or Membership Director, Kimberly Tanner. We welcome your questions, and we extend an open invitation to all who want to join our liberal community of faith.



MINISTERIAL MUUSINGS

September 2012

It is good to be back here with you all again at Valdosta UU!

I spent the summer with my grandkids as well as doing some traveling. Getting to see different corners of the world always serves to remind me of the wonderful diversity of our planet. I especially like experiencing other countries through an insider within that culture so that I can see the land and its people from within rather than merely visiting as a tourist. Since a dear friend of mine is in the middle of a two year contract teaching English in Thailand, I had the opportunity to do just that there in that country. An added bonus was that my son, Dustin, was able to travel with me.

Thailand has captivated my imagination ever since I saw "The King and I" as a kid. Today there is still a king over Thailand, of the same dynasty as the king depicted in that movie. And the king still dominates the political scene in the country even though Thailand is today considered a constitutional monarchy. The people still revere the king in much the same way, and his picture appears in virtually all public spaces as well as occupying a high place in virtually every home.

The country has a fascinating religious heritage as well. 95 percent of Thais self identify as Buddhist. There is a Buddhist temple or shrine on nearly every street. Acts of piety and devotion are a part of everyday life for many of the people. Buddhist temples are the hub of social life in the local communities. As one of the holy days fell during our visit, Dustin and I got to participate in the services at the local temple. It was so interesting to see how family and communal life revolves around the temple and the role the monks play in spiritual life of the community.

Being in a culture almost completely informed by Buddhism was a little disorienting. But I wouldn't trade the experience for anything. It gave me a new respect for certain aspects of that religious tradition. Like the way they greet each other with the wai, the prayerlike gesture of the hands that shows respect for elders and for social standing. Or the way they remove their shoes whenever they enter each other's home – as a gesture of respect. And the emphasis Thais have on merit making – doing good deeds in this life as a way of bettering their lot in their rebirth. It seems to me that we insensitive Americans could learn a lot from Thai culture.

And so for me foreign travel is rewarding as much for the inner experience as it is for the external sights, sounds, and tastes you get exploring a mysterious and exotic new land. Michael Crichton, of "Andromeda Strain" and "Jurassic Park" fame, wrote these words in his autobiography, "Travels,"

"Often I feel I go to some distant region of the world to be reminded of who I really am. There is no mystery about why this should be so. Stripped of your ordinary surroundings, your friends, your daily routines, your refrigerator full of your food, your closet full of your clothes--with all this taken away, you are forced into direct experience. Such direct experience inevitably makes you aware of who it is that is having the experience. That's not always comfortable, but it is always invigorating."

So it was for me in going to SE Asia for the first time. Besides the fun we had, I think I came away a little more self aware. I look forward to sharing more about my experiences there with you all in the coming weeks. And I

look forward to hearing about what have been going on in your life as well.

Fred Howard is our part time minister. You may contact Rev. Howard by email (preferable) at fredhoward3622@gmail.com. He is available for consultations on Monday and Wednesday afternoons on most weeks from 2-5PM by appointment. Fred welcomes any questions you may have about membership in our congregation. He is also available for weddings and rites of passage ceremonies by prearrangement.

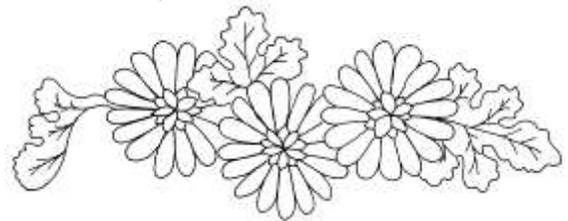
Sangha Tuesdays

5:30-7:00 PM at the church

The KTD Buddhist reading and meditation group continues to meet on Tuesday evenings at the church. Everyone interested in Buddhist practice and meditation is welcome. The group shares tea from 5:30-6, sits and meditates (Buddhist shamata meditation) from 6-6:30, and discusses the reading from 6:30-7. The group is currently reading Robert Thurman's book, "The Jewel Tree of Tibet." If someone is unable to sit on the floor, it is perfectly alright to use a chair. Otherwise, people should supply their own pillow for sitting. The group shares books and the liturgy.

Yoga Basics

Ready for yoga at the UU? Jane Zahner, certified yoga teacher (RYT200), is offering a seven week series on Wednesday evenings from 6:00 - 7:30 P.M. The sessions will be September 12, 19, and 26; October 3, 10, 17, and 24. There is no charge for the classes, but donations will be accepted to pay for facility usage. Beginners and occasional practitioners will become more comfortable and safe doing yoga in group classes or at home. Gentle instruction and guided practice in common yoga postures, breathing, and relaxation techniques support increased flexibility, strength, and stress reduction. Bring a yoga mat (or beach towel) and an active body; leave with a quieter mind. If these sessions demonstrate enough interest, classes may continue later in the fall.



Communicating at UU Valdosta

Newsletter Editor: Betty Derrick
Website Manager: Carol Stiles, uvaldosta@yahoo.com
e-Mail List: Carol Stiles
Facebook: Kimberly Tanner
Local Publicity: Dee Tait

September 15: Deadline for October newsletter.

If you prefer reading this newsletter on the website, e-mail the editor to remove your name from the mailing label list.



“We will surely get our destination if we join hands” Aung San Suu Kyi. This is one of two posters created by the RE children earlier this summer during the Shared Sunday Services with Serenity Christian church.

Social Action Activities

Break Bread Together

Our date for meal deliveries with the Break Bread Together program is the 2nd Monday (and 5th when there is one) of each month. If you would like to help deliver meals beginning about 11:00 AM, please contact Frank or Rosie Asbury.

South Georgia Pride Festival Saturday, September 15 Noon-7 PM

We will have a UU table at the South Georgia Pride Festival on Saturday, September 15, noon to 7:00 p.m. Contact Kimberly Tanner if you can volunteer! The Festival will be held in John Saunders Park, 1151 River Street.

Raynae' Williams, Assistant Executive Director of South Georgia Pride, Inc. and a member of our congregation. Says this year's event is filled with music, fun, food, and vendors! There will be over 40 vendors at this family friendly event as well as some great talent that will be on the stage all day long. From local bands to out of town performers, this event is sure to please everyone's taste in entertainment. She says, "The theme is "Serving with Pride" and we are honoring our LGBT Veterans and those currently serving. Our special guest speaker is Evelyn Thomas from California. She has been a great warrior in the fight against Don't Ask Don't Tell. She was there the day President Obama signed the repeal. She will tell her story of how she is still fighting for the LGBT rights in the Military."

Come out and enjoy a day to celebrate diversity!!



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

CAROL STILES

School's in session! In some ways, our church year is similar as well, so I welcome back those of you who have been travelling this summer. This month, Rev. Fred Howard, our part-time minister returns to the pulpit twice-a-month as well.

I also welcome many new faces! It is wonderful to add a few chairs to our gathering on Sunday mornings, and we hope you will continue to join us. If you are not yet on our low-volume, moderated Yahoo e-mail announcements list, please send me an e-mail and I will add you to the list.

Some of you may wish to come just for the Sunday service or our book discussions, movie nights, and other activities. Some may wish to get involved in other ways – interested in helping with a Sunday service meet-n-greet, provide flowers, lay-lead, etc.? See Doug Tanner, Vice-president and Program Chair, who will add you to our Sunday Service volunteer e-mail list. How about Religious Education for our growing children's program? Contact Sue Bailey, RE Director. Interested in helping with communications or membership? See me or Kimberly Tanner, Membership Director. How about opportunities to engage in social justice, many of which we offer during the year? Let me know! Have a particular interest in environmental issues, recycling, and so on? There's an opportunity for leadership in that area – please see me. Whatever your talent, we welcome you to join us in building the beloved community

In community, Carol



Thank You! Thank You!

For layleading services: Betty Derrick, Lars Leader, Amy Wells, Doug Tanner, Dee Tait

For speaking at Sunday services: Keith Johnson, Doug Tanner, Carol Stiles

For Sunday Service music: Keith Johnson, Amy Wells, Bill Webster, Doug Tanner

For Stories for All Ages: Sue Bailey, Amy Wells

For helping with Children's RE: Sue Bailey, Rosie Asbury, Teagan Dunn, Meredith Covert, Doug Tanner, Raynae Williams, Kimberly Tanner, and anyone else who has helped out.

For serving as Meet and Greet Hosts: Doug Tanner, Dee Tait, Rosie Asbury, Valerie Webster

For greeting visitors: Dee Tait, Lars Leader, Kimberly Tanner, Doug Tanner

For delivering Break Bread meals: Frank and Rosie Asbury,

For cleaning the church: Frank Asbury, Lars Leader

For sweeping the sidewalk: Doug Tanner

For initiating the purchase of glasses and organizing the kitchen: Dee Tait



Let's Have Some Fun!!

Games Night

Friday, September 21 6:30PM - until at the church
 Games Night will resume this month. We understand some folks have really been missing this event over the last several months! Hope to see you back in September! Bring your favorite beverage and a snack to share. Often we play Mexican Train (dominoes), but we enjoy learning new games. If you have a game that is not limited to small numbers of players, please bring it along! Contact: Susan Bailey

PIZZA AND A MOVIE

Friday, September 28 6: 30 PM at the church

I am excited to announce that our movie for this month will be part one of "Long Strange Trip," a feature length movie on the development of Unitarian Universalist thought. Produced by a Unitarian Universalist with a special interest in this project, it premiered at General Assembly in 2011. The film makes the roots of liberal religion interesting and accessible without oversimplifying the complex religious and political forces that attempted to control the vision of Jesus and his early followers. There's bound to be some fascinating debate and dialogue over this one. Join us on Friday, September 28 for part one of "Long Strange Trip." Please note the special time, the 4th Friday of the month. The film lasts approximately one hour with a discussion afterward. A \$5 contribution toward pizza and drinks is suggested. Contact: Fred Howard and David L. Rodgers

NEXT BOOK DISCUSSION AND POTLUCK: Friday, October 12 - 6:30 PM - At the church

The book will be "My Two Moms" by Zach Wahls with Bruce Little Field. The book cover describes this book as "a resounding testament to the power of family." Some of you may recall that Zach Wahls addressed the Iowa House Judiciary Committee in a public hearing regarding a proposed constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage in Iowa." Zach, then the nineteen year old son of a same-sex couple, proudly proclaimed, "The sexual orientation of my parents has had zero effect on the content of my character." Betty Derrick's copy of the book is available for loan until the last week of September when she needs it returned to her. Ask around at the church if you would like it passed to you over the next several weeks and mark your calendar to join the discussion and potluck in October. Contact: Betty Derrick.

UU Church of Valdosta Board of Directors Meeting News August 1, 2012

(Note that some matters appear in articles and announcements elsewhere in this newsletter and are not repeated here. The full minutes are posted on the RE wing bulletin board after approval by the board.)

- Kimberly Tanner presented options and board voted to purchase 80 copies of *The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide* from the UUA to give to potential new members.
- Organizations for Share-the-Plate were discussed for the upcoming year. Carol will put together a list of past organizations to develop an annual schedule, but new suggestions are always welcome.

- Plans for the Interfaith Pride Service, Sept. 15, 2:00 p.m., were discussed.
- Next meeting, Thursday, September 6, 6:00 p.m.

Notes from Kids' RE - Sue Bailey

It's been quite busy in Kids' RE with all the new faces! Our Shared Service RE project was a big success again this time. The kids created beautiful matching paintings. One will stay at the UU church and the other will go to Serenity Christian Church as a reminder of our 2012 Shared Service Sunday. We traced the hands of each child around the outer edges of the two canvases and the children painted the hands in myriad colors. In the center of each painting is a quote by Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the Burmese Opposition, "We will surely get to our destination if we join hands." In the weeks following Shared Service Sunday, the RE kids have been focusing on diversity, friendship, and treating people fairly and kindly. Our current project is a group "greeting card" that will be sent to the Muslim community in Murfreesboro, TN offering congratulations and well-wishes on the opening of their new prayer and cultural center. As always, if you would like to volunteer in the RE classroom, please talk to Sue Bailey. We welcome visitors of all ages!



RE children creating stories.

Treasurer's Report - Rosie Asbury July 31, 2012

Receipts	July	July -present (1 mo.)
Plate	\$ 138.00	\$ 138.10
Pledge	1870.00	1870.00
Rent	100.00	100.00
Share Plate	<u>149.28</u>	<u>149.28</u>
Total Recpts	\$2257.28	\$ 2257.28
Disbursements		
Speakers' \$	200.00	200.00
Minister	0.00	0.00
Pest Control	35.00	35.00
Supplies	6.42	6.42
Utilities	326.60	326.60
Save our Child.	149.28	149.28
Others(mailbox)	<u>86.00</u>	<u>86.00</u>
Total Disbursements	\$ 803.30	\$ 803.30
Net Receipt	\$ 1453.98	\$ 1453.98

Kitchen Stuff

Thanks go to Dee Tait for initiating a call for real glasses for use at the church so that we can quit using throwaway cups and improve our environmental image a bit. She says she doesn't want to be reimbursed for the glasses she bought, saying it's her small contribution to the environment. Meredith Covert bought the pretty Anchor brand ones (now washed and in the cabinet to the right of the refrigerator) along with some of the Libby brand ones Dee wound up buying from The Dollar Tree (the rest of those are in the cabinets just left of the stove). Betty Derrick added several glasses from home, so we are all set until we increase our membership or if we and/or Serenity Church increase attendance at our yearly potluck.

Incidentally, those pretty plates we have been using for Meet and Greet that Doug and Kimberly contributed to the church, have been moved to the shelves right of the refrigerator with the glassware. Also, some nice china plates (bread size) that were hidden in the cabinet left of the stove have been moved to the right of the sink with all the large china and Corelle Ware plates.

All the plastic and Styrofoam cups – a cabinet full – are above the stove. We now have a plentiful supply of reusable flatware, dishes, cups, and glasses. Thanks for using these instead of throwaway plastic and paper ware. In addition special thanks go to Dee for initiating this project and those who have helped with it.

UU Activities and Announcements

September 7-9 *O.W.L. Facilitator Trainings* (all levels), Roswell, GA

September 15 *Heart Matters! A Stewardship Workshop Offered by Southern Region UUA, 9:00AM to 3:00PM, presenter Kenn Hurto, UU Church of Tallahassee, FL*

September 21 *End Of Life Care After Terri Schiavo Conference, Tampa, FL*

October 10-14 *UU Women Spirit Workshops, Explore Divine Feminine in Spirit Nourishing Workshop and Rituals, The Mountain, Highlands, NC*



UUA TRUSTEE TIDBITS

Joan Lund September 2012
jlund@uua.org or 813-931-9727

Welcome to a “new” season in many congregations. In some of our congregations September begins with a “Water Communion” which is an expected and welcome rite. There is also something new for us at the national level. The UU College of Social Justice (UUCSJ) is an endeavor of the exciting collaboration between our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). This new College has been a part of a UUSC strategic plan dating back approximately two years.

The UUSC, founded in 1940, is a nonsectarian organization that works to advance human rights and social justice worldwide. Partnering with grassroots organizations and advocating for changes in public policy the UUSC helps people in needed areas such as organizing workers and relief in the wake of a disaster. Without writing too much about our UUA, established in 1961 as the result of a merger of the Universalist Church of America and the American Unitarian

Association, let it be said our UUA helps UU congregations thrive and promote the values of Unitarian Universalism. Both institutions share the mission of becoming true allies of oppressed people, and acting as catalysts for justice.

The UUCSJ is directed by newly appointed Rev. Kathleen McTigue who will lead the organization in offering current leaders and future activists of any age a broad and effective portfolio of service-learning and justice-education experiences. There will be no funding from the operating budgets of our UUA or UUSC because the UUCSJ is being funded by designated gifts from donors. At General Assembly (GA) it was announced there has already been a \$1 million gift. In approximately a year the UUCSJ plans to provide programs at the congregation level the help them determine justice priorities and develop local social justice alliances and partnerships.

I venture to say all of us have been challenged to make a difference in our world. The various social justice experiences/trips the UUCSJ already has offered and/or will be offered in the future are a way to experience an opportunity for personal transformation. Recently a group of 60 UUs traveled to Haiti to assist in the continued re-build there. Another recent trip involved a group of youth/young adults who journeyed to Tuskegee, Birmingham, Selma, and Montgomery to learn about the history of the civil-rights movement. They returned with reports of being overcome with emotion upon learning about Bloody Sunday, and the use of tear-gas and brutal beatings, including the death of one man, during the ultimately successful march to Montgomery.

If your congregation would like more information about the UUCSJ and/or upcoming social justice trips contact uucs@uua.org. If you would like to contact me please email at jlund@uua.org.

I look forward to hearing from you. May your upcoming congregational year be spiritually enriching and rewarding in all of your endeavors.



Rev. Kenn Hurto, Regional Lead
 Transitions Director

khurto@uua.org

Amidst the summer excitement of gold medal winners in the Summer Olympics and the worry about violence and polarized politics, our congregations continue to minister to our people, empowering them to witness for love and justice. Our Justice General Assembly continues as our congregations apply the lessons learned there — notably working with local partners on matters of human dignity and basic rights to food, safety, voting rights, and healthcare.

By the way, please do let us know how your congregation is taking GA home!

In a recent *FLD Connections*, Kenn Hurto noted changes coming to our region that, we hope, will further strengthen our congregations to serve individual members as we all work to build the world we dream about. This newsletter is part of that change. Hereafter, the *FLD Connections* and *MSD E-newsletter* become one regular communication, linking congregations from the U.S. Virgin Islands to congregations in Mid-Tennessee and in between. Our new combined e-newsletter is titled *Deeper Connections*.

Our goal is to keep you apprised of resources and opportunities for congregational development. In addition congregational leaders will continue to receive information on District-focused events. Early this fall, the Southern Region Staff team will launch a rotating blog for our Directors to introduce themselves to you and offer personal commentary on our faith, American religious trends, and matters of moral justice.

At the Church-in-the-Woods

New Hope Christian Community Church- Sunday evenings: Choir practice at 4:30 PM. Service at 6:00 PM.
<http://www.wix.com/nhccc1/nhccc>

Taoist Tai Chi – Monday and Thursday: Beginners Class 7-8 PM; Continuing Class 5:30-7 PM. Contact Dennis Bogyo or Luana Goodwin.

PFLAG Meeting – 4th Tuesday each month, 7:00PM
Contact: Doug Tanner The web page for PFLAG Valdosta:
<http://community.pflag.org/Valdosta>

Yoga Basics – Wednesday 6-7:30 PM, September 12-October 24. Contact Jane Zahner for further information.

Pride denied: Valdosta mayor denies LGBT event proclamation (Article from *The Valdosta Daily Times*, July 27, 2012 written by Dean Poling.) “Valdosta Mayor John Gayle denied a proclamation request this week for an annual city event celebrating tolerance and acceptance of the region’s lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. ‘I felt like if I sign a proclamation, I’m endorsing that lifestyle,’ Gayle told *The Times* Thursday, adding he has friends who are gay but he opposes the lifestyle and cannot sign a proclamation connected to the annual South Georgia Pride Festival.

“Each day, the mayor responds to proclamation requests, proclaiming everything from a certain person’s birthday being that person’s day to 50th wedding anniversaries to major events such as fundraisers to battle cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer’s, etc. South Georgia Pride’s request to recognize its annual event is the first time that Gayle has refused to issue a proclamation. However, the event has received a proclamation previously, said Raynae Williams, South Georgia Pride’s assistant executive director. Two years ago, for the first South Georgia Pride Festival, Williams said organizers did not think to even request a proclamation. A request was made last year, when John Fretti served as mayor, and he issued a proclamation proclaiming the event date as South Georgia Pride Day. Williams said she asked Mayor Gayle to sign a proclamation similar to the one approved last year.

“The requested proclamation does not include an endorsement of gay marriage nor does it officially endorse the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender lifestyle. ‘The proclamation opposes bullying and hate crimes based on sexual orientation,’ Williams said. ‘It says the city recognizes we’re here and we’re part of the community.’

“In essence, the submitted proclamation would have noted that the South Georgia Pride Committee:

- “seeks a welcome environment for people of all sexual orientations or gender identity/expression;
- “takes a stand against bullying and hate crimes and works to educate tolerance for all sexual orientations, races and religions;

- “works to educate the community of AIDS/HIV infection and prevention;
- “recognizes the contributions of area gay and transgender citizens to the texture and diversity of our community;
- “recognizes that gay and transgender citizens work ‘alongside us in our places of employment, and contribute to the success of our employers and businesses’;
- “recognizes that gay, transgender and “questioning students” attend area schools and colleges;
- “recognizes that gay and transgender people donate time, talent, labor etc., to community organizations;
- “recognizes that gay and transgender people attend area places of worship.

“If signed, the proclamation would urge “all citizens to recognize and applaud the numerous contributions of the South Georgia Pride Committee as well as all gay and transgender members of the community. By not signing the proclamation, Williams said she worries it sends the wrong message to teens in despair regarding their sexual orientation or identity. She said she also fears it may send the wrong message to people intolerant of others’ differences. ...”

Following are some comments on **Mayor's Refusal to Sign Proclamation from Rev. Floyd Rose**, Minister of Serenity Christian church and President of the SCLC written on July 28, 2012. He says, “Since WALB-TV did not air my comments, I want to share them with you, and more on the subject.. And, if you feel so disposed, please pass them on. This is America. It is a multi-religion nation. When Mayor John Gayle placed his left hand on the Bible and his raised his right, he swore to defend and protect the Constitution of the United States, not his religious beliefs. I, too, am a Christian, but my legal rights are not subject to the religious views of others. When the Mayor said some of his friends are gay, and he has nothing against gay people but he couldn't sign the proclamation for the P.R.I.D.E. event, it reminded me of the 1960's when whites said, I don't have anything against black people, some of my best friends are black, but I don't want them to have the right to sit next to my children in school, to eat at the lunch counter, or drink from the same water fountain as whites.

The Valdosta-Lowndes County chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference acknowledges the rights of all American citizens, whatever their color, their race, religion, or sexual orientation. And we are all things human before we are anything racial; white, black, brown, red or yellow. We are all things human before we are anything religious; Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Jew. We are all things human before we are anything gender, male or female, And in this human context, there are needs that are common to us all. We all need food to eat, air to breathe, water to drink, clothes to wear, shelter to protect us from the elements, and family and friends to love, and to love us. And, we were all born, and must all die. We may be in different religious, racial, and gender boats, but we are all sailing in the same human ocean. We have a choice. We can continue to try to sink each other’s little boats, whose colors, shapes, or sizes we don't like, or we can all get on the love boat, where there is unconditional acceptance; where we don't have to see everything alike, or like everything we see, but where we are all free to see what we see; where we accept each other’s products, with no obligation to accept their conduct and where the differences which make no difference to our Creator, make no difference to us. ...”