At the 2010 GA, UUs were faced with a dilemma. The 2012 GA was scheduled to take place in Phoenix, but Arizona had just passed its draconian immigration laws. In the end, the delegates decided not to boycott the state, but instead to join forces with local UU churches and other partners who actively work on these issues, and take a stand. And that’s exactly what we did in June, at what was billed as a “Justice General Assembly.”

The weeklong GA culminated in Saturday night’s vigil. UUs wearing their bright yellow “Standing on the Side of Love” tee shirts joined others to insist that Maricopa County Sheriff Joseph Arpaio shut down his notoriously inhumane “Tent City,” where some 2000 detainees have nothing more than cloth tents to protect them from heat that can exceed 130 degrees. From live testimony, we learned that most of the detainees had been stopped for minor traffic offenses, like a missing muffler, found to be undocumented, and then held while awaiting a determination of their status. The law has no provision for obtaining a bond, and the detentions, which often stretch over months or years, break up households, deny families their wage earners, and leave children, many of whom are US citizens, alone to fend for themselves.

Throughout the week, in talks and workshops, we learned about the problems and explored the ways we might get involved. This year’s Ware Lecturer, Maria Hinojosa, shared what she had learned as she filmed a documentary for PBS's Frontline. Angela Maria Kelley, the Vice President for Immigration Policy and Advocacy at the Center for American Progress, brought us up to date on laws in other states. We heard riveting testimony from families who were caught up in the system.

While we focused primarily on the treatment of the undocumented, we also learned about issues facing other marginal groups, such as the increased use of incarceration of young African American men and the growing political power of private detention companies. We were made aware of the modern slave trade and wage exploitation of people who cannot speak up for themselves. At the request of our indigenous partners, we voted to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, which originated with 15th century papal bulls that gave license to explore the new world and exploit indigenous populations and which has been cited in several US Supreme Court decisions to justify the federal government’s control of Indian lands. We called upon our country to fully implement the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We chose our next Congregational Study Issue, agreeing to partner with other faith communities, Planned Parenthood, and other organizations to ensure the availability of reproductive choice for all persons.

Finally, we spent time with Cathy Rion, our soon-to-be Director of Social Justice Ministries, sharing ideas and getting excited about the work we’ll be able to do together. I can say we came home proud of the work of our association.

Julia Sayles, Board Trustee and 2012 GA Delegate
I write these words in late June, but I am thinking of mid-August, the fast-approaching time when I finish my work as All Souls’ Interim Coordinator of Pastoral Care. More than that, I am thinking of all of you who have stretched out your hands to me in blessing. Blessings have poured into my life since I began this work, and I have you to thank. You have blessed me by allowing me into some of the most intimate, difficult, and private parts of your lives. You have invited me to share in your grief and your delight. You have sat with me and talked of the small things and the great things. You have allowed me to share worship with you in new and powerful ways. You have taught me again and again and again.

You have taught me that sometimes the best thing I can do is just be. Just be and be with—to accompany another on the shared journey of life. You have amazed and inspired me by your own pastoral gifts. You have taught me that sometimes pastoral care means talking about the weather and the color of the paint in the renovated kitchen, as well as about the difficulties of a teenager or the challenges of aging. You have reminded me that I have gifts to give and purposes to accomplish. You have shown me that I may not always do as well as I’d hope, but generally as well as I can. You have given me a measure of humility in the face of the Mysteries of life by helping me remember that, though there are many things we cannot answer, we can live into the questions indefinitely. Please God, I hope I have encouraged or helped even one person as you all have encouraged and helped me along this journey. Because of these months, my life has been changed for good. Thank you.

All that said, don’t think you’re going to get rid of me! While I’ll be doing a part-time field education placement at Cedar Lane UU Church in Bethesda and in school full-time, you’ll still see me ‘round here. What Sundays I can, I’ll be in the pews, and I’m sure I’ll find my way back to a meeting or two. In the meantime, please let me know if you have anything you’d like to discuss with me, regarding pastoral care or otherwise. I’d love to meet with you between now and August 12.

Blessings to you and yours, Catharine

Sometimes in life we change because of time, sometimes because of our own experiences, and sometimes because of those around us. We are blessed by hearing stories from those like us and different. The one thing we can all share is that change is not only inevitable but can also be a difficult and transformative time and experience all its self. Some of us change internally and nobody can see until we say it. Others of us change and everyone see it. For those of us who are not gender-normative, this change occurs very publicly and can be full of joy and pain, struggles and celebrations. At the July 15 service, a few members of the All Souls community will share this particular time, experience, and journey. Transforming souls is about changing the external and internal so that things are most cohesive for our spirits.

At the July 29 service, the Young Souls and I will share how the journey is not only about transforming our selves but also about searching—full of uncertainty—for community, for roots, for a better understanding of who you are. Though we engage in these journeys and transforming times throughout our lives, the time we feel the growing pains the most and tend to forget are in our young adulthood. For this reason, this service will be infused with the stories and spirit of that unique time of growth and change.

My final service with you will be on August 12. After the long journey we had this year of celebrations, growth, discovering, and challenges, it will be time for us to part. I have enjoyed the learning you have imparted and shared with me during this year of your ministries, as well as the year of you engaging with my emerging ministry as your intern minister. Through the parties, potlucks, preaching, committee meetings, services, and weekends on the Bay, at a farm, and in New Orleans, we have bonded. I have seen many of you and worked with many of you and broken bread in ways I could have never imagined. For that I am truly thankful. This has been a powerful learning and growing environment, and a piece of my ministerial journey I shall not forget. I feel deeply embraced by this justice-seeking, beloved community that thinks of all ages, through the ages, and says: yes, you are part of All Souls. For that and much more I thank you. In my final service I will speak to all of this and the power of saying it all.

Blessed Be, Lex

Catharine Clarenbach
Interim Coordinator of Pastoral Care
cbclarenbach[@]allsouls.ws
The Future of Our Church Building

Our church building, constructed in 1923, has seen changes over the years—such as air conditioning for the sanctuary—but many areas of the building and grounds still need considerable renovation. In 2009, the Comprehensive Assets Planning (CAP) Team, with Tom Fox and Barbara Corprew at its head, was formed with the mission of developing a comprehensive plan for the future of our building and grounds. The CAP Team’s work is grounded in All Souls’ fourth vision goal: “To build the Beloved Community, All Souls Church cultivates and celebrates a welcoming and accessible building that provides nurturing spaces for spiritual growth, serves the community within and outside the walls of All Souls Church, and embodies our commitment to sustainability.”

Since its inception, the Team has worked diligently to incorporate both that vision goal and the hopes, desires, and values of our congregation. To capture the congregation’s opinions, the Team interviewed staff and key church groups, invited comments via the church newsletter, hosted a town hall meeting, conducted focus group sessions, and surveyed the entire congregation. Based on the information collected, the CAP Team determined that renovations and improvements were needed in four major areas: (1) accessibility, sustainability, and safety; (2) lower-level learning space; (3) welcoming entrance and main-level renovation; and (4) enhanced fellowship and community space.

Upon the CAP Team’s recommendation, the church hired the Kerns Group, an architectural firm, and together they reviewed historical architectural drawings and documents and toured the building inside and out. The Kerns Group developed preliminary designs for improvements in all four major areas and calculated an estimated total cost of $14.7 million. To gauge the congregation’s reaction to these conceptual designs, the CAP Team held 22 design feedback sessions in the fall of 2011. Some 380 adults and 40 children attended these sessions, offering comments during Q&As and in questionnaires. These comments made it clear that the first major area—accessibility, sustainability, and safety—should be given highest priority.

In October 2011, the congregation voted to move forward with a capital campaign. The recently completed Third Century Challenge has raised nearly $7.5 million. This fall, the CAP Team will again engage the congregation in prioritizing the items to be included in the final plan. This process will draw upon several streams of information: the design feedback comments, suggestions received during Third Century Campaign visits, and lessons shared by representatives from other churches that have gone through similar projects. In keeping with the congregation’s top priorities, the 7th Principle Committee (Green Souls) has also proposed (and the CAP Team has adopted) seven sustainability principles. The final plan will necessarily be influenced by a best estimate of the money that will be available for the renovations (in addition to raising the bulk of the funds through the capital campaign, the church is looking at other sources).

Let your voice be heard!

It is important that all congregants participate in this fall’s meetings, where you will be able to give your opinions and suggestions. Late in the fall, the congregation will be presented with a final plan and, at the annual meeting in December, we will vote to approve or reject it. If it is approved, architects will develop detailed drawings for the construction, which is expected to begin in late 2013 or early 2014. (During the renovation, the church will have to relocate certain activities, including, for a time, Sunday services).

Brian Marshall and I serve as the Board of Trustees’ liaisons to the CAP Team. The Board is grateful for the hard work and dedication of Tom, Barbara, and the other Team members. Their committed efforts will result in a more welcoming, sustainable, and nurturing church building to better serve our congregation and community.

The Board also extends heartfelt thanks to those of you who so generously pledged to the Third Century Challenge. If you have not yet made a pledge, we sincerely hope that you soon will. Each pledge not only increases the project’s budget, but also raises our participation rate, a factor that external sources of funding take very seriously when considering our proposals for support.

Co-Vice President and Liaison to the CAP Team Sterling Lloyd
All Souls Church Unitarian’s Vision Statements

To build the Beloved Community, All Souls Church cultivates and celebrates…

...spiritual growth and transformation as we question, learn from others, and seek lives of meaning and reverence.

...a welcoming, diverse, and vibrant community where we love, respect, and care for one another.

...service and prophetic action to move the world toward justice, healing, and sustainability.

The deadline for The Spirit of All Souls is the third or fourth Friday of the month. Submit notices, articles, and letters to spirit[@]allsouls.ws.

Upcoming deadlines:
September issue: August 17

Editor: Gary Penn
(gpenn [@] allsouls.ws)