



STARR KING  
SCHOOL FOR THE MINISTRY

www.sksm.edu

# Journal

A member of the Graduate Theological Union

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December 2006

- SKSM COURSES
- ADMISSIONS
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- PODCASTS

Don't miss our latest **podcasts**--Dave Sammons interviews the Rev. Bonnie Dlott, SKSM grad, about her years of experience teaching the Our Whole Lives sexuality program to children. Also, a guided meditation written by SKSM student and spiritual consultant Jeaneleyse Doran Adams. Click the Podcast button above to download to your MP3 player or listen on your computer.

Watch the Journal for upcoming announcements about our new Seminary for the Laity online certificate program, starting '07-'08.

M.Div. and M.A. in Social Change application deadlines:  
Dec. 1, Feb. 1 & March 1

M.A. application deadlines:  
Sept. 30 & Feb. 15

## SKSM COMMUNITY CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING

*Sustainable Rest, Sustainable Action*

The ECO Steering Committee invites you to reflect on the interplay of sustainable rest and sustainable action. Simply be aware of how this theme plays out in your life, your congregation and the larger world. We invite you to share in this process --

How does caring for yourself help you to care for the world?

How does caring for yourself call you to care for the world differently?

How does restoring the sacred rhythm of rest and action help us to work for social justice?

What intersecting privileges and oppressions impact our ability and willingness to rest and to act in sustainable ways?

## SKSM Announces New Seminary for the Laity



Starr King School will launch a new online certificate program in fall 2007 for Unitarian Universalist lay leaders and clergy.

The Seminary for the Laity will help church administrators, religious educators and ministers, as well as UUA leaders and those involved in non-profits, learn skills to further organizational goals, plan strategically for the future and sustain both organizational and personal growth.

This flexible online program will feature enhancements such as podcasts, video segments and a learning community. Dr. Helen Bishop, who holds an Ed.D. in organizational leadership and has an extensive background working with Unitarian Universalist congregations, districts and affiliated organizations, will lead the program as director.

In 4-8 week courses, Starr King will help students build such skills as using Appreciative Inquiry as a strategic planning tool, establishing and working within a behavioral covenant, conflict management, and developing social justice leadership in a Unitarian Universalist context.

Watch the e-Journal and our Website for more information, or [contact](#).

*Photo: Dr. Helen Bishop*  
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## A Uniquely Placed Chaplain



As a veterans' hospital chaplain, Suzanne Semmes found she became a spiritual emissary who, thanks to her Unitarian Universalist faith and the special position of chaplains in military culture, could serve patients of all religions and soldiers of all ranks.

Semmes, a fourth-year M.Div. student with a focus on community ministry, spent three months in 2006 working in the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System in the San Francisco Bay Area.

"Unitarian Universalism renders us uniquely placed to address the needs of the VA population," she said. "Given the number of patients, a Catholic priest, for instance, might practically visit only Catholics. But I could visit everyone, including those who marked their religion as 'uncertain' or 'none' on the intake form and sometimes made up half the patient population--people who might otherwise receive no chaplain visits. Having a Unitarian Universalist chaplain enables patients to be better served. My Starr King training in world religions meant I could meet the basics of multiple faiths, and that's a strength in a healthcare setting."

Semmes discovered yet another strength in her position -- the fluidity of the chaplain's role.

"In the military," she said, "chaplains serve side-by-side with soldiers, so soldiers trust and rely on them. And chaplains are the only people whose rank changes according to whom they're speaking with. It shifts so there's always a sense of equality before God. Chaplains can move into places where no one else can go."

Given a choice of populations to serve, Semmes decided to work with homeless women in outpatient care, in-patient men being treated for acute substance abuse and elderly men in nursing home care. The women tended to be Gulf War-era vets, the men with substance abuse problems Vietnam vets, and the elderly World War II and Korean War vets.

Art as spiritual intervention is one of Semmes's specialties, and she soon applied its principles by bringing in her guitar for the men to play, and drawing to music, making collages, writing collaborative poetry and building a "beloved community" with her women's group.

"The arts are a language that speaks without words," Semmes said. "For a patient, being able to speak another language can be really healing. My experience as a chaplain was so profound, so moving. I learned that even in the midst of pain, mental illness and desperate physical injury, the human spirit is indomitable. These people could still play the guitar, still make art, still laugh."

Recently, Semmes completed training to work with people suffering post-traumatic stress disorder. She's also developing a curriculum for using art with adolescents in conflict with their caregivers. In May, she'll graduate from Starr King, start the chaplaincy board certification process and then see the MFC in September as the next step toward fellowshiped ministry. In the meantime, she's looking for work as a hospital chaplain, her beginning aspiration when she started Starr King School, now affirmed by her chaplaincy experience.

*Photo: Suzanne Semmes*  
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## Message From the Acting President



As we head into the holidays, the Starr King School community is reaching out to support Thomas Smith, our Vice President for Finance and Administration who is on medical leave; Patti Lawrence, our Professor of Congregational Studies, home recovering from surgery, and Ibrahim Farajajé, now recuperating in Istanbul from a bout of pneumonia. We're also concerned about Chris Long, a second-year student recovering from prostate surgery, and Gail Hughes, a first-year student student who had to leave our school community due to medical problems.

That said, we feel very good about our new Seminary for the Laity now being developed by Dr. Helen Bishop. This online certificate program should be up and running by fall, aiding a renewed emphasis on lay education now being promoted by the UUA. We're also deep into the beginning stages of strategic planning, which will underlie our work in the coming years. President Rebecca Parker, though still on sabbatical, has agreed to take part in this process of envisioning Starr King School's future and the ways we can make our dreams come true.

*Photo: Rev. Dr. David Sammons*  
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## Supporting Starr King



Starr King School's Seminary for the Laity is on the way, thanks in part to a recent \$7,000 grant from the Unitarian Universalist Funding Panel.

The program's four-to-eight week online courses are designed to explore and expand lay leaders' understanding of Unitarian Universalist theology, history, polity and leadership skills for more effective, grounded engagement in congregational, denominational and community life. With this preparation, students will improve partnerships with ministers, church directors and administrators, as well as other congregants, who help shape the policies and practices of our liberal religious faith in action.

These online courses will also enrich participants' sense of themselves as Unitarian Universalists, committed to moving the arc of the world toward greater justice, tolerance and compassion.

We anticipate enrolling students as early as fall 2007. For more information, [contact](#).

Rev. Kelly Flood  
SKSM Vice President for Advancement

*Photo: Rev. Kelly Flood*  
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