

Margret's Musings – *The people God trusts?*

One of the little “inside jokes” I heard when I first joined a UU church was that “we are the people God trusts enough to let us close down churches over the summer, knowing we will come back in the fall.”

In the 1800's, when many of our churches were founded, our society was substantially rural, and entire families worked the fields around the clock in the summer to plant, cultivate and harvest the crops. In those years before air conditioning and sanitation systems, city dwellers who could afford it would head out to the mountains or seashore, seeking cooler, cleaner places to spend the time of heat, flies and noxious odors. Under those conditions, it made sense to operate our churches on a 10-month schedule, accommodating the economic and cultural patterns of society.

How much sense do those patterns make in this millenium, in a society that runs 24/7 all year around? This church has a rich tradition of lay-led worship while the minister takes some time off in July and August, and we have great volunteers providing the music and pastoral prayer for Sunday services. I have heard from several members that they first visited the church in the summer, and they liked those services well enough to come back for more. But it may take more than just a good Sunday sermon to keep this church vital and welcoming when the weather grows warm.

How do first-time visitors see the church on a summer Sunday – is there a membership greeter at the door to show them the ropes? Do people make a special effort to say hello during the coffee hour and tell them about the church? And if they arrive with children, is there something interesting for the kids to do while the adults are in the service? How do they find out that we provide nursery care for the youngest ones, even in the summer? Does someone tell them that our Covenant Groups continue to meet over the summer, and about other activities they might find welcoming?

This interim time is a great opportunity to think in new ways about what it means to be a leadership church for our movement in this vital urban setting. This is a good time to consider new possibilities, and how best this historic church may become a church for the future. It is so good to be with you – See you in church!

Margret