

# First Unitarian Society of Rockland County

*Pomona, NY*

*www.fusrc.org*

*Spring 2008 Chalice Lighter Called Congregation, UU District of Metro NY*



Our congregation was founded in February 1956 as a fellowship of liberal-minded individuals who met in a local YMCA and spread the word through conversations, newspaper stories and small ads. Within two years the membership had doubled in size and had incorporated. Within five years, we called our first minister.

In the spring of 1962, we received a generous gift of wooded land in Pomona, NY, from Michael and Hilda Striker, members of a Unitarian Church in Brooklyn. FUSRC Members diligently raised money, secured an architect and with much sweat equity built the current meeting space—affectionately referred to as “our home in the woods.”

Over the past seven years, we have gone through a period of growth and renewal. We made a big breakthrough in 2001 when we employed Reverend Allen Wells as a half-time minister, our first minister since 1991. This commitment, now with Reverend Harry Green as our half-time minister, has continued with enthusiasm through the present time.

We have also made significant improvements in our physical space, through the refurbishing of meeting rooms, the addition of a new bathroom, and a new oak floor in the worship room. We worked with a consultant early in this period to assess our strengths and weaknesses and to set goals for the future. Every-member canvasses have become a yearly feature. New and long-term members alike share a renewed sense of commitment to growth and development.

The Religious Education program has consistently been a central part of our strategic vision. Over the past seven years we have renovated classrooms, implemented monthly Children's Worship Services, developed a number of vibrant intergenerational services, begun a new pre-school curriculum, and revitalized participation in district youth activities. But these successes cannot be sustained solely with lay leadership without burning out the enthusiasm that produced them.



We have therefore committed to securing a professional part-time Director of Religious Education. A professional DRE would help in many ways, including:

- assisting in the logistics of organizing the RE program, including child care, monthly Children's Worship Services, interaction with society committees, and so on,
- keeping us up to date regarding innovative methods and ideas for use within our program,
- providing teacher training, and maintaining and expanding our library of RE curricula and other teaching materials,
- engaging in regular communication with the district RE staff to help pass along relevant information to the society at every level,
- helping recruit teachers and classroom helpers, monitoring discussions and activities relevant to UU RE, and sharing useful ideas with teachers and the committee, and
- communicating our vision of liberal religious education more widely within our community.

We would use our Chalice Lighter grant to supplement our budget over the next five years. As an example, the following scenario illustrates one possible breakdown. (We are aware that the amount of the grant could be higher or lower than the \$30,000 we have used for planning purposes.)

Year	From Chalice Lighter Grant	From FUSRC Funds
2008–2009	\$10,000	\$5,000
2009–2010	8,500	6,500
2010–2011	6,000	9,000
2011–2012	4,500	10,500
2012–2013	1,000	14,000

We have already set aside the initial \$5,000 from last year’s pledge campaign to utilize in 2008-2009, and are seeking to do the same this year.

In our early years we received a gift of land that we used to build a center of Unitarian Universalism within our community that has made a difference in the lives of many families. In recent years we have committed to revitalizing that spirit of energy and growth to be even more effective at advancing our UU mission. Almost 50 years after that initial gift of land, we find ourselves poised to make good use of an additional gift, made possible by the Chalice Lighter Campaign. Please help us, and thank you for your support!

