

**From Sandra's Study**  
**Rev. Sandra Fees**  
**September 9, 2007**

Worship forms the center of our congregational life. As your worship and spiritual leader, it is my top priority. As we begin a new church year this fall, it is a good time to incorporate a few changes to enliven our shared experience.

As a way to more fully include the gifts of our members, I am creating a Worship Associates program. Each Worship Associate will work with me on several services throughout the year, providing a short personal reflection or testimonial. They may also help with other aspects of the service, depending on their particular talents.

Members continue to express a desire for more reverence and silence. We will experiment this year with a new approach to our candles of joy and sorrow that is deeply moving for many of our other Unitarian Universalist congregations. We will light our candles in silence. Cards will be available as you enter the sanctuary where you may write and sign your joy or sorrow. These will be incorporated into a pastoral prayer and passed along to the Caring Committee for acknowledgement. I know that lighting candles is a beloved ritual in our congregation. I hope you will remain open to this, giving it at least through the end of the year. At that point, we can consider whether to make some adjustments or even return to the current format.

I continue to work closely with our music team to ensure that music and other service elements are well-integrated. You will see a special emphasis this year on music as a ministry of the congregation. The choir will sing new music twice a month on scheduled Sundays. We will be introducing the idea of "congregational singing" to build the congregation's confidence and joy in singing as a spiritual expression. The choir and individual choir members will teach us new hymns and lead us in rounds on a regular basis.

The appearance of our sanctuary has been greatly enhanced over the past few years by the work of our aesthetics committee, and we will continue these efforts. In addition, our greeters and ushers will continue to provide a warm, welcoming experience as people enter the sanctuary. And we will continue our commitment to include the children and youth in the first part of our worship services.

I welcome your ideas and thoughts about worship. Worship needs to have some stable elements to count on, but it also needs to remain open to change and innovation. If you have suggestions or want to volunteer to help with the Sunday morning program, please talk with me. It is important for me to hear from you – and not just about sermons, but about the entire worship experience.

With love,  
Sandra