



What's with UUS

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalists of Sterling
A Welcoming Congregation
Sterling, Virginia



Minister's Message



There But for the Grace of God: A Reflection on the Disasters in Burma and China

Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

In the soul wreckage of tragedy, in that bleak recognition of the number of lives that have been lost and the damage that has been done, I search for a prayer that feels appropriate – and I rarely find one. I remember when I first heard the statement “There but for the grace of God go I.” Even as a child I was at once awed and shaken. I saw it as an honest and humble recognition of the way that some meet with pain while others are spared, but I sensed an undercurrent that bit at my already avid Liberally Religious core. In the statement, it appears as if God’s grace is limited, that it is received and enjoyed by some, while others, in the shadows of God’s love, suffer.

I have never seen God in this way – indeed my understanding of God is a force that connects life and thrives in life’s bondedness. I see God, the spirit of life, that which each of us calls holy – as the force that moves us to awe and wonder when we honor the shared destiny of *all that ever was and will be*. This God is a force that touches all and can reach all.

Yet in the wake of the natural disaster in Myanmar Burma where it is assumed that over 100,000 people have lost their

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President's Message



A Good Run

Last month, as I prepared my report for the Annual Meeting, I had a chance to reflect on what the congregation,

Rev. Anya, and the Board have accomplished over the course of this church year.

It is an impressive list of accomplishments that I won’t repeat here, partly because that would be cheating on writing my final article, and partly because, well, you already know what this church has accomplished. What I will offer are some observations about being Board President for the sake of those who follow.

I’ll start with how it feels to look back at the end of my term and survey what we’ve accomplished. In a word: tired. I’ve been admonished not to share that fact with you, on the fear that nobody will want to volunteer for the job of Board President if I appear to be anything but energized at this moment. But I haven’t been in the habit of pretending I feel one way when I actually feel another – it wouldn’t be fair to you or me, and you would see through the façade anyway.

But it’s a good tired – it’s the kind of tired that comes with having accomplished a significant goal that took work to achieve, like finishing a long-distance race and looking back on the course of the run. In this case, the accomplishment is the successful launch of Rev. Anya’s career in ministry and the thriving state of the congregation.

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Worship Calendar

June 1 “All Ages at the Welcome Table” This intergenerational service will celebrate our Religious Exploration adventures of the past year through song and through the Biblical stories that children and youth have been studying. Between the Special Needs Task Force, advocating for access to children’s literature, and inviting new friends to explore with us, this has been a year of welcoming. Rev. Lyn Cox, from the Joseph Priestley District office, will be the guest leader and storyteller.

June 8th – “Service of the Living Tradition” Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael will encourage us to reflect on the past year – the deaths, the births, the major life changes, the joys and tragedies in our world, the private accomplishments and trials, the hope that has been shaken, and the hope that has withstood. A Social Justice Forum will follow the service.

June 15th – “Strength and Vulnerability: A Father’s Day and Every Day Consideration.” Rev. Anya Sammler will invite us to reflect on the persistent human desire to fix the problems and mend the pain.

June 21st – *We Begin our Summer Services.*



(Minister, continued from page 1)

lives in cyclone Nargis, and in the wreckage of an earthquake in Szechwan China where tens of thousands of people, adults and many children, have died, I find that I, with my particular sense of the holy, struggle to respond. I am left without words – no utterance feels adequate.

And though I often wish that I had something to say that would help me and others make sense of the loss, I have come to recognize that initial move toward silence as necessary.

A similar loss of words occurs when I experience awe, when I see the way that beauty, a beauty that is beyond my ability to understand, transforms our world. Some examples of this beauty are when individuals risk their lives to save others, when people of different lands and different religions find ways to respect one another, when children meet their worlds without the baggage of prejudice or hatred. Wondering over such beauty brings me to a sacred silence often accompanied by tears of joy.

Experiences of devastation that shake us so deeply that no words feel adequate may call us to a similarly struck response. In the stillness and silence we admit that we cannot understand, answer, or fix the tragedy. This simple recognition is both honest and faithful. It is akin to awe – to recognizing that we do not control nor fully understand how and why beauty and tragedy of such magnitude exist. It is stillness, a stance that honors our place – both of and with all that is – in this astoundingly interdependent web of life.

This response may feel inadequate, but in its honesty it welcomes us to a deeper compassion for all who suffer and it may call us to action - to donating resources of money or time. It may call us to converse with friends or family or, as best as we can, with our young ones. Or it may call us to prayer or to considering the many ways that we can act in the world to bring about joy and beauty - to counteract the pain.

I see all of these responses as opportunities for our world and ourselves – they are our steps toward healing, our attempt to dance with the sadness and the questions that remain.

May we reach out in all the ways we feel called, and may we recognize the silence and stillness that grips us in the face of tragedy, not as our failing but as our faith, as a first and honest step toward healing.

Blessed be,

Anya

**Minister's
Summer Schedule**

This gracious community offers its minister four weeks of vacation and four weeks of study leave. I intend to take a good deal of that time this summer season. This is my intended schedule. Please do, however, call any time that you need to talk - when you are mourning the loss of a loved one, if you are sick or injured yourself, if a family member is sick or injured, if you are sad or concerned about a pressing issue ... the list goes on.

Please know that I hope you will call whenever you need to.

6/6 – 6/22: Vacation

6/23-6/29: Ministers Days and General Assembly in Ft. Lauderdale Florida

6/30 – 7/13: Work Weeks

7/14 – 7/27: Study Leave

7/28 – 8/10: Vacation

8/11- 8/24: Study Leave

8/25: Back to regular schedule!



(President, continued from page 1)

I haven't run the race alone by a long shot. This year's Board of Trustees has energetically supported the objectives of improving the function of UUS, enabling Rev. Anya to develop a positive relationship with the congregation, and of helping the congregation to thrive. In that the Board has been very successful, and for that they deserve everyone's thanks. And, of course, every Member and Friend of the congregation should be proud of the support you've all given to Rev. Anya and the leadership of the church.

To Dave Miller and Bonnie Lepoff, who will follow me as UUS Board President, I offer two observations:

You're not alone. One of the smartest things the Board did this year was to experiment with having the past year's Board President sit in at Board meetings, and one of the smartest things the congregation did was to make that change a part of the bylaws. The resulting continuity of institutional knowledge was very beneficial to me this year, and I expect it will be beneficial to you as well. Between that and the support you'll get from the Board, you'll have a solid base from which to work.

You'll get a lot out of the experience. Being Board President is first and foremost about serving our religious community, but I've also found the experience greatly to my benefit as well. I have a much stronger connection to the congregation as a result of having served it in this capacity – that alone would have made the experience worthwhile. But I also found that the challenges of leading a group of part-time volunteers, and doing so mostly on the basis of consensus rather than authority, has resulted in my being a much more effective and diplomatic leader at work.

To anyone who might wish to consider serving as Board President, I can highly recommend the experience. But I would also offer these caveats:

Don't jump at the chance. Being able to lead the congregation is a significant honor, but it does require an investment of time and energy. It isn't a great deal

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of time and energy, but it comes out of your copious spare time – if you're like most of us, you have little of that, so it's worth carefully considering the impact your term will have, particularly on family.

This work isn't for everyone. If you have leadership experience in other areas of your life, then it's relatively easy to step into the Board President role. If you're looking for an opportunity to learn more about leadership, the Board Presidency is a good way to get that experience. But if you're uncomfortable in the role of a team leader, or are primarily a solo performer, I don't recommend it.

Likewise for organizational skills – not that everyone who agrees to be Board President has to be an engineer, but if the thought of keeping a detailed schedule, organizing a meeting, and keeping a group in focus and (more or less) on task makes you cringe, you might want to consider other worthy contributions you could make to the life of the congregation.

So once again, I would like to take the opportunity to thank UUS for having confidence in my ability to serve as your Board President this year – it has been a great honor.

Yours in Faith,

Bryan

Partner Churches! Kut and UUS

At the UUS annual meeting on May 18, the congregation voted unanimously to join the UU Partner Church program and become a partner church with the Unitarians in Kut. For those who are still unfamiliar with Kut, a short description is provided below.

Kut is a remote and picturesque village of about 200 houses that sits at the top of a mountain, literally at the end of the road. Almost all the villagers support themselves by subsistence farming. The agricultural fields are located at the bottom of the mountain, in a fertile valley, which requires up to an hour's walk each way. The main crops include rice, potatoes, and cauliflower.

The village has no running water, and women and youth can spend up to four hours a day walking to collect water. Most residents earn below the global poverty level of \$1 a day. Their language is called Khasi and was oral only, until the 1800's when British missionaries began writing it down.

Kut has three lower primary schools (grades 1-4): the Unitarian school, a village school, and a Catholic school. Only the Catholic school provides upper primary instruction (grades 5-7). About 60 Kut students walk to Puriang to attend the Unitarian upper primary school there. (Puriang is home to the partner church of UU Fairfax.) All three schools are open to all students, regardless of religion.

The Unitarian school in Kut has 30 students. The school hours are from 7-9 AM, but they would like to extend those hours and also be able to increase the current teacher salary of \$12.50 a month.

Expect to learn much more as we chart our course together in faith and discovery.

If you have ideas or questions about our new partnership, please contact any of the following individuals who were involved in the UUS Partner Church exploratory group: Mike Berger, Rosalie Clavez, E.B. Kirkbride, Linda Reeder, Susan Rose, Al Swett, and Shelley Tamres.

Join the Journey in 2008–2009

Journey with Religious Exploration (RE) in 2008-2009 and find out more about Unitarian Universalism, discover the diversity at UUS and explore your own beliefs. Children from birth through twelfth grade and all adults are invited to join the journey. Just fill out a volunteer and children's registration form at church or contact Linda Weaver to reserve your place.

The plan is for children and youth to travel in four age groups. Infants, toddlers and preschoolers will begin their journey at UUS by getting to know their peers and some of the caring adults in the church. Children in kindergarten through fifth grade will be treasure hunting. They will search for treasures within themselves, others, UUS, Unitarian Universalism, and the world. A number of activities will be offered each Sunday, providing opportunities for children of all ages and with a variety of interests to fully engage in the search.

The Middle School Youth Group will take a similar journey, searching at an even greater depth with "Compass Points," a curriculum that has received rave reviews from both students and teachers. The High School Youth Group (YRUU) will continue the wanderings they shared with the congregation in this year's Youth Service. They will create their own dynamic group, integrating worship, leadership, learning, social action and fellowship.

Adults are encouraged to take part in this journey by leading a children's or youth RE group throughout the year or by helping one or more Sundays. This is a great opportunity to participate in building the intergenerational community at UUS, while learning more about Unitarian Universalism and yourself. Don't forget to save a place for yourself or your child.

Religious Exploration Schedule

	Date	Children's RE Topic	Leader	Helper	Nursery Adult
June	1	RE Service	No RE	No RE	M. Burns
	8	Trail Clean Up	C. Chandler	J. Confoy	McMullen Gruner
	15	Games Day	S. Connors	N. George	James
	22	The Prince and the Rhinoceros	N. McCormick	N. George	H. Donovan
	29	The Clever Boy	K. Ward	Need Help	Need Help
July	6	The Blind Man and the Hunter	Need Help	Need Help	G. Douoguih
	13	Supriya's Bowl	L. Weaver	M. Masiak	G. Douoguih
	20	Paplotzin and the Monarchs	T. Dick	N. George	S. Tamres
	27	Rabbit Foot	A. Lum	S. McMullen	H. Donovan
Aug.	3	The Fiery Tail	S. Roche	A. Roche	Need Help
	10	The Emerald Lizard	N. George	W. Manuel- Scott	K. Houck
	17	Old Joe and the Carpenter	A. Lum	M. Masiak	L. Reeder
	24	The Stonecutter	K. Fitzgerald	W. Manuel- Scott	L. Reeder
	31	Raspberries!	L. Weaver	Need Help	S. Tamres



Summer Religious Exploration

Children's Religious Exploration (RE) this summer will focus on cooperation, peace, justice and tolerance, with stories from *Rhinos and Raspberries*, a curriculum developed by the Teaching

Tolerance project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Participants will explore the important issues raised by these stories through discussion, crafts and other fun activities. There are a few more spaces for adults and youth to help in the RE class or the nursery. Contact Linda Weaver if you are interested in helping.

Religious Exploration Events

June 1 - "All Ages Welcome at the Table" The annual RE service allows the community to share in the explorations of the children this year and recognize the amazing RE volunteers who made it possible.

June 8 – Trail Clean Up Children and youth will pick up litter on part of the Washington & Old Dominion Trail during regular RE time. Participants will receive T-shirts from Keep Loudoun Beautiful.

June 15 – Games Day during regular RE time and church picnic after the service.

June 22 – Summer RE begins.

Roving Reporter

By Susan Rose

School is almost out! What was your favorite thing about school this year?

Grace (13) Nothing!

Maddie (7) Snow days!

Logan (5) Recess!

Rachel (17) I liked my English class a lot!

Sora (16) really liked lunch!

Julia (16) Chorus!

Derek (13) Chorus!

Alex (18) That I only had three classes!

Maddie (16) Extra-curricular activities, after school!

Anna (8) My field trip to the zoo!

Molly (8) Felting and recess!

(Is there a theme here?!)

Small Group Ministry

May has come and gone – faster than the blink of an eye. Summer is here! Didn't we used to enjoy summer's relaxing times? Now our schedules are even busier and our travels keep us on the move. All this activity, some of which keep us from coming to Sunday services, makes small group activity even more important. These groups keep members and friends connected - to themselves and to others in our church community. Our small group ministry program is an important part of UUS, providing that connection between Sunday services. More information on all small groups is available on our web site (www.uusterling.org). Watch for announcements from these groups. UUS small groups are always open to new members.

New Groups

It is easy to start a small group. If you like to read and would like to discuss what you read with other UUS'ers, or if you like to watch and discuss movies, or if you like to quilt or do other fabric related things, you could start a group. More information is available on our website under the drop down menu ministry/small groups, or contact Shelley Tamres (Board liaison to Small Groups) at shelleytam@aol.com.

Choir

The choir will sing on June 1st and June 8th then break for the summer. We will begin rehearsals again the end of August. Please see our music director, Dan Boothe, or any choir member if you are interested in joining us next year.

Covenant Groups

Covenant Groups meet once a month during the school year to discuss a topic related to spiritual growth. Our most recent topic was "Justice." We shared stories of how our belief in justice affects our lives. As a member of a group, you will be able to engage in these kinds of deeper conversations and you will get to know the other members of your group in a way that might not otherwise be possible. Our last meeting of the year is this month. Covenant Groups will begin meeting again in

October. We expect there will be four groups again next year meeting once a month on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings and Tuesday at noon. Other groups will be formed as interest grows. Send an email to Bonnie Lepoff at blepoff@cox.net or contact Rev Anya if you are interested in joining a group next year or just learning more.

Elder Care Support Group

The Elder Care Support Group meets for breakfast at 8:30 am the second Sunday of each month at the Virginia Kitchen in Herndon to discuss issues related to caring for our parents. This month's meeting is on June 8. The coffee is always ready for us. If you would like to come, contact Mike Berger at m.d.berger@ieee.org or just show up.

Men's Spirituality Group

The Men's Spirituality Group is meeting on second Fridays for conversation and comradery. Watch for meeting announcements or contact Tony Thede or Al Swett for more information.

Stream Monitoring

The UUS Stream Monitoring Group monitors Beaverdam Run in Ashburn. Members get together periodically to conduct a habitat survey and a biological survey according to a protocol. Results are submitted to the Loudoun County Wildlife Conservancy and the Loudoun County Watershed Watch and used for the annual "The State of Loudoun Streams" report. The Stream Monitoring Group encourages environmental stewardship, and is an opportunity to learn, interact, and commune with our local environment in a family-friendly, fun outdoor activity. Contact Scott Findley at sfind39@aol.com for more information.

Women's Earth Based Spirituality Group

In this circle of UUS women, we explore the UUA sixth source of wisdom - "Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature". The UUS WEBS Group usually meets the 4th Friday of every month. Watch for the announcements. For more information contact Kim Fitzgerald at Kimberly.fitzgerald@ngc.com.

UUS Board Meeting Highlights

May 1, 2008

Finance (Paul Roche and Alyssa Lum)

We continue to do better than expected financially. As of Sunday 4/27 there are some pledges outstanding. If these funds all do come in, we will most likely end the year with a cushion (excluding pledges for next fiscal year paid early).

The Fidelity accounts are open and funds have been shifted from Wachovia Money Market to Fidelity Cash Reserves which should add 2 percent or so to our interest over the next year.

Alyssa is re-joining the fray and has begun taking over some of the duties again! Welcome back Alyssa!

Membership (Jeff Chandler)

In the spirit of Rev Anya's April 23 "A Letter to our Congregation," the Membership Committee spent most the meeting pretty much patting ourselves on the back and enjoying each others company.

We did divide up the call list for three upcoming Membership events:

Sunday May 4: Inquirer's Class

Saturday May 10: New to UU Class/
Mixer

Sunday May 25: New Member
Ceremony

Database management issues:

- We need consensus from the congregation that web deployment is acceptable, this item will be added to the agenda for the congregational meeting.
- Mike will draft helpers for UI coding tasks; this requires background in database architecture, php/odbc, and web forms (webmasters welcome help in selecting candidates).
- For the interim, provide Lori with the current XLS spreadsheet and establish it as our golden copy, as well as asking (impinging upon) Lori to take on the task of updating it.

Ministry (Bryan George)

The Committee on Ministry did not meet with Rev Anya this month, but did meet to work on the "map project," which will be mounted somewhere to show the location of all members to facilitate pastoral care, etc. The Committee also discussed the ministerial evaluation.

Religious Education (Linda Weaver)

Meetings attended by DRE: Board meeting April 3 and Staff and Board President meeting April 22.

RE Classes and Special Events:

- Britton Reeder-Thompson visited the combined K-7th grade class to share his experiences visiting Khasi Hills.
- The K-7th graders decided to collect items for the Loudoun County Animal Shelter. The collection will take place at church on April 27 and May 4.
- Youth Group overnight April 26-27 and Youth Service April 27.
- Nikki George is getting T-shirts and supplies from Loudoun County for the Trail Clean Up on June 8.

Child Care:

- Child care was provided for the Coffee House on April 12th and at the Ordination / Installation on April 13th.
- As of April 24, two people have committed to providing child care during the Leadership Summit on May 4 and during the Annual Meeting on May 18.
- Please thank our nursery provider, Amy Wingo, for making time to work during all of these events!

Volunteers and Registration:

- Summer RE volunteer sign up began on April 6. As of April 24, half of the positions are filled and there are only three openings left for RE class leaders.
- 2008/2009 RE registration and volunteer sign up opened on April. It will begin in full on May 4.

RE (Gus Douoguih)

The whole church community should be made aware of the necessity of relieving parents in RE, especially in the nursery. We may, after consultation with the Minister and DRE, want to put it on some agenda (Board, Leadership, retreat....) in the near future.

Social Action (Shelley Tamres)

Rev. Anya has scheduled a Social Justice Forum on June 8 in order to re-establish an SA Committee.

The Partner Church Task Force conducted a Town Hall meeting after the Service on April 20 to present information on the effort and answer questions. (The Congregation will vote in May on the motion to enter a Partner Church relationship. If it passes, a Partner Church Circle will be formed that will be separate from Social Action.)

2008-2009 Board

It is my great pleasure to announce the 2008-2009 Board, which was approved by the congregation at the Annual Congregational Meeting on May 18, 2008:

President – David Miller

Vice President – Bonnie Lepoff

Secretary – Jeff Chandler

Treasurer – Paul Roche

Co-Treasurer – Alyssa Lum

At Large – Scott Findley

At Large – Ken Ward

At Large – Linda Reeder

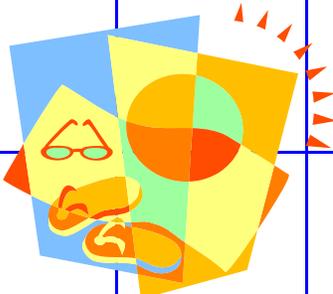
At Large – Belinda Bullock

Please join me in congratulating next year's Board of Trustees.

Yours in Faith,

Bryan

June 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>10:30-11:45 AM Religious Exploration</p> <p>10:30-11:30 AM: Worship Service</p> <p>12-1:30 PM Inquirer's Class</p> <p>3:30-9:30 PM AAFCJ</p>	<p>2</p> <p>7:30-9 PM Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p> <p>7-9 PM Board of Trustees Meeting</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p>5-10 PM AAFCJ</p>
<p>Please visit http://uusterling.org for current and additional information.</p>						
<p>8</p> <p>8:30-10 AM Elder Care Support Breakfast</p> <p>10:30-11:45 AM Religious Exploration</p> <p>10:30-11:30 AM: Worship Service</p> <p>3:30-9:30 PM AAFCJ</p>	<p>9</p> <p>7-9 PM Covenant Group</p>	<p>10</p> <p>7-9 PM Covenant Group</p>	<p>11</p> <p>7:30-9 PM Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>12</p> <p>7-9 PM Covenant Group</p>	<p>13</p> <p>7:30-9:30 PM UUS Men's Group</p>	<p>14</p> <p>6 AM-10 PM AAFCJ</p>
<p>15</p> <p>8:30-10 AM Elder Care Support Breakfast</p> <p>10:30-11:45 AM Religious Exploration</p> <p>10:30-11:30 AM: Worship Service</p> <p>1:00 PM Picnic</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<p>21</p> <p>5-10 PM AAFCJ</p>
<p>22</p> <p>10:30-11:45 AM Religious Exploration</p> <p>10:30-11:30 AM: Worship Service</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<p>25</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p> <p>7-9 PM WEBS Group</p>	<p>28</p> <p>5-10 PM AAFCJ</p>
<p>29</p> <p>10:30-11:45 AM Religious Exploration</p> <p>10:30-11:30 AM: Worship Service</p>	<p>30</p>					

Unitarian Universalists of Sterling
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Your Church Leadership

Minister: Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

Director of Religious Exploration: Linda Weaver; **Music Director:** Daniel Boothe

Board of Trustees: *President* - Bryan George; *Vice President* - Dave Miller; *Secretary* - Jeff Chandler;
Co-Treasurers - Alyssa Lum and Paul Roche; *At-large* - Gus Douoguih, Judy Gruner, Scott Findley, Shelley Tamres

UUS Mission Covenant Statement

The Unitarian Universalists of Sterling offer a place where reason and spirituality converge. We welcome members of the community who are seeking such a religious home. Our mission is to make the community a better place to live by promoting a variety of religious expressions, working toward social justice, and fostering diversity. In order to carry out this mission, we covenant to listen to each other, encourage the exchange of creative thought, and respect our differences.

UUS Sunday Services 10:30 a.m.

Unitarian Universalists of Sterling meets at the Sterling Oaks Commerce Center Sterling, a handicapped-accessible 24-7 facility, located on 22135 Davis Drive near Route 28 and Church Road in Sterling, Virginia. Child care and children's religious education are both provided during worship services. Dress is casual. Children are encouraged to wear play clothes.

From Northbound Route 28: Take Route 28 North exit from the Dulles Toll Road. Turn right at Church Road. Turn right on Davis Drive. Go about one block and turn right into the parking lot.

From Southbound Route 28: Take Route 28 south from Route 7. Turn left at Church Road. Turn right on Davis Drive. Go about one block and turn right into the parking lot.

From Westbound Route 7: Turn left at Sterling Boulevard. Turn right at Church Road. Go three miles. Turn left on Davis Drive. Go about one block and turn right into the parking lot.

What's with UUS

Communications Committee Chair: Terry Dick; **Editor:** Linda Reeder

Production: Jeff Chandler, Susan Miller

Board Liaison: Jeff Chandler

To submit material for publication, send by email to uus-newsletter@yahoogroups.com

Submission Deadlines
6/20/08 for July/August
8/22 for September
9/19 for October