

UUWF HISTORY: PART II

TIMELINE: 1960s-2007

August 2007

Compiled by Ellen Spencer, Executive Administrator, and Phyllis Rickter, UUWF president 1987-91, with thanks to the Rev. Elinor Artman for permission to use excerpts from her Timeline. Subscript numbers referred to end notes beginning on page 8.

- 1960s** **UUWF programs** include leadership training, advocacy for women and girls, programming for women's groups, publications and program guides on topics such as aging, images of women in the media, women's rights, sexist language.
- UUWF membership meetings (required by bylaws) initially meet yearly. By 1971 this is changed to meetings held every two years (in odd-numbered years) called Biennial Conferences or Biennials.
- 1970** *Voices of the New Feminism*, a joint project of UUWF and Beacon Press, is published. Edited by UUWF publications editor Mary Lou Thompson, it contains essays by Caroline Bird, Shirley Chisholm, Mary Daly, Betty Friedan and other early feminist activists.
- 1973** *Roe v Wade*: members of the UUWF group at the First Unitarian Church in Dallas play prominent role in the Texas court actions leading up to the historic Supreme Court decision.
- UUWF becomes a founding member of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (now the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice).
- 1974** To draw attention to women's issues at the annual UUA General Assembly, UUWF board creates the Ministry to Women Award, originally given to non-UU individuals or organizations that have ministered to women in an outstanding manner (the non-UU criteria is dropped during the 1980s). First recipient is *Ms. Magazine*; the presentation ceremony is held off-site since the GA Planning Committee will not allot UUWF space for it.¹
- 1976** UUWF begins publishing *Kyriokos*, a quarterly supplement to the *UU World* (then in tabloid format). It includes essays by contributors (almost all women) who were paid for their work. Each issue is centered around a woman-oriented theme: Women and Aging, Women and Their Bodies, etc.; publication continues until the mid-1980s.

- 1977** UUA Women and Religion Resolution, written by UUWF member (and former UUWF board member) Lucile Schuck (later Longview) is passed unanimously by the UUA General Assembly; UUWF adopts the similar Religion and Human Dignity at its Biennial that same year. (W&R becomes the shorthand for Women and Religion).²
- 1978** UUS President Paul Carnes appoints the first continental W&R Committee, to report directly to him.
- 1979** Sarah Weddington, lead counsel in *Roe v Wade*, keynotes UUWF's Biennial in Washington, D.C. The first W&R conference for district chairs is held at Grailville, OH. Lucile Schuck Longview holds a workshop: "UU Principles, Do They Fit Us as Women?"
- UUWF changes its fiscal year from July 1-June 30 to the calendar year, to ease pressure on staff by the great increase in financial activity during the summer because of the Clara Barton Camp.
- UUWF board creates Clara Barton Sisterhood, as a way for local women's groups, congregations, and others to honor women aged 80 and over (age is chosen because Universalist Clara Barton, best known for her work in organizing nursing services during the Civil war, was over 40 when she began her life's work).
- 1980s** A movement away from an emphasis on business begins at UUWF Biennials. By 1985, less than four hours of the two-and-a-half day meetings are devoted to business, with programs (workshops, panel presentations) taking center stage. Biennials during this period were generally held in May in various locations around the country.
- 1980** "Checking Our Balance" is published by the W&R committee, and later (1991) a significant revision is published, "Cleansing Our Temple." An examination of the UUA Principles and Purposes, in place since merger in 1961, is begun, initiated by continuing requests by UUs for inclusive language.
- The first "Women and Religion Convocation on Feminist Theology" is held in East Lansing, Michigan, featuring Carol Christ and Naomi Goldenburg. It is attended by 350 women and a few interested men.
- 1982** The President's W&R Committee becomes a committee of the UUA Board.

- 1983** UUWF's 20th Anniversary celebration at Biennial prior to GA in Vancouver, BC. Rev. Charlotte Cowtan-Holm (later Cowtan) is keynote speaker. Caroline McDade ("Spirit of Life" author) is a featured performer. This Biennial is the first to take place during the weekend immediately prior to GA in the same city as GA (in those days GA began on Monday).
- 1984** The second Women and Religion conference takes place in Albuquerque, NM, sponsored by UUWF, W&R, LREDA, MsUU.
- 1985** After a two-year study by congregations, the UUA General Assembly approves the revised Principles and Purposes.
- UUWF Biennial in Decatur, GA, focuses on program was women's spirituality and features Dr. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, a Roman Catholic feminist theologian. Rev. Judith Walker-Riggs, Dr. Betty Hoskins, and Dr. Clare Benedicts Fischer are UU keynote responders.
- Responding to the fact that UUWF could find no Biennial speaker who could address women's spirituality from a UU perspective, UUWF members in the Southwest District begin raising the funds that later become UUWF's Feminist Theology Awards (now Margaret Fuller Grants) restricted fund.
- 1986** The UUWF board votes to establish a separate corporation to operate the Clara Barton Camp, which has been taking up significant organizational human and financial resources. Sandra Caron, former UUA moderator and an unsuccessful candidate for the UUA president, is recruited as president of the new corporation and charged with recruiting its board. UUWF's intention: to lease the property to the new corporation for an annual rent that will help finance UUWF's other work.
- 1986** UUWF holds its first Pre-GA day, devoted to women's programming around specific themes. The first Pre-GA focuses on women's history; other Pre-GA days are held in non-Biennial years until the late 1990s (for the last four or five years, programming was built around the Ministry to Women Award recipient).
- UUA publishes *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, by Rev. Shirley Ranck. The UUA funds two joint meetings of the UUWF Board and the W&R Committee, with the purpose of clarifying their goals and relationships.
- UUWF hires a consultant and begins a Strategic Long-Range Planning project (SLRP), forming a committee made up of both members and non-members to do this work.

- 1987** The Camp Corporation sues UUWF for ownership of the N. Oxford property and the restricted funds benefiting the camp, causing controversy among a small but vocal segment of the membership.
- The SLRP Committee completes its work and delivers a five-year plan to the UUWF board. A work based in vision, the next step requires the board to set priorities to guide an implementation process, which will involve revising the plan to reflect the reality of UUWF's available resources. While various UUWF boards attempt this work over the next few years, subsequent events stalemate this process.
- Following meetings at the 1987 Biennial in Little Rock, AR, UUWF and the Camp Corporation agree to mediation and settle the lawsuit out of court. UUWF retains ownership of the property but agrees to lease it to the Camp Corporation for \$1/year for 99 years. In return, the Camp Corporation agrees to operate the Birthplace Museum.
- Attorneys advise that UUWF cannot turn over ownership of the restricted funds benefiting the camping program to the Camp Corporation without applying to the Massachusetts attorney general's office. UUWF agrees to allow the Camp corporation to manage the Camp and Birthplace restricted funds.
- 1988** Southwest UUWF women turn the approximately \$43,000 they have raised – including a \$10,000 gift in honor of Claire White (of Dallas; a former UUWF board member). UUWF obtains matching grant from the Veatch Program of the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, Manhasset, NY, and raises another \$40,000. This endowment is permanently restricted to benefit a grants program (initially the Feminist Theology Awards) that funds accessible projects that focus on UU feminist theology.
- To launch the Feminist Theology Awards, UUWF publishes *Transforming Thought, Vol. I*, a book of essays exploring the status of UU feminist theology. Contributors include Priscilla Baird Hinckley, Lucile Schuck Longview, Carolyn McDade, Rev. Judith Walker-Riggs, and Beth Williamson.
- 1989** First UUWF Feminist Theology Awards are presented at the Biennial in New Haven, CT. Recipients include Marilyn Sewall, for a project ultimately resulting in her book, *Cries of the Spirit*; and Cynthia Grant Tucker for work on women's roles in congregations.

UUWF publishes a second book exploring UU feminist theology; contributors to *Transforming Thought, Vol. II* include Rev. Dr. Jane Boyajian, Rev. Dianne Arakawa, Rev. Jody Shipley, Carol Graywing, and Dr. Betty Hoskins.

Massacre of women students in Montreal prompts UUWF to call upon membership for newspaper clippings illustrating violence against women. UUWF founds UUs Acting Against Violence Against Women, a coalition of UU individuals and groups around the country.

- 1990** A third continental UU women's conference, "WomanQuest," is held at Lake Geneva, WI. Attendees affirm work of UUWF and encourage it to continue its work as an "umbrella" for UU women's organizations.
- 1991** In response to several incidents, UUWF and the W&R Committee issue a joint Call to Action at GA for the UUA to address the issues of clergy sexual misconduct. The first meeting of what became known as Task Force 1 is held in Boston in October, bringing together representatives of many UUA organizations.
- With author Elizabeth Fisher, UUWF begins development of *Rise Up and Call Her Name*, an adult religious education curriculum. Structured as a journey around the world, the 13-part curriculum examines religious traditions that venerate the female. Unlike *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, the curriculum is not designed for women only.
- 1992** *Wellsprings: Sources in UU Feminism*, ed. by Rev. Denise Tracy, is published; this project was partially supported by a Feminist Theology Award.
- The UUA Board appoints a Task Force for Congregational Responses to Clergy Sexual Misconduct, known as Task Force 2. The final result of their work is the publication of "Creating Safe Congregations" in 1997.
- UUWF publishes *Finding Our Way: Responding to Clergy Sexual Misconduct*, Vol. III of the Transforming Thought series. The book examines responses of various U.S. religious organizations to clergy sexual misconduct and explores theoretical, ethical, and theological analyses of the issue.
- 1993** The fourth UU women's conference, "Womanspace" is held at Highland Springs, CA, sponsored jointly by the UUWF and women of the Pacific Southwest District.
- 1994** UUWF publishes *Rise Up and Call Her Name* and holds trainings for the curriculum's facilitators at various locations around the country.

- 1995** Following a board-staff retreat, UUWF leadership makes growing and increasing membership a priority; to support this initiative office staffing is increased (from two full-time, two part-time to four full-time, two part-time employees).
- UUWF changes from a Biennial to Triennial meeting schedule and holds the first Triennial in the fall in Minneapolis.
- 1996** The UUA Board sunsets the Women and Religion Committee.
- The UUWF Board acknowledges the financial crisis precipitated by borrowing from endowment funds, lays off the entire staff, and begins to rethinking its mission. One full-time and one part-time employee are re-hired, initially on a temporary basis, to keep basic organizational functions operating.
- 1997** Feminist Theology Awards program is suspended for revisioning.
- 1998** “Vision the Future” is the theme of UUWF’s Triennial; former UUWF President and UUA Moderator Denise Davidoff, UUA Executive Vice President Kay Montgomery, and Rev. Meg Riley, director of the UUA’s Washington Office for Advocacy, are panelists at the keynote discussion.
- Based on input from members at Triennial, the board adopts a new mission statement, “to advocate for women in our UU community and to celebrate our accomplishments,” and begins examining ways to make UUWF more relevant to UU women.
- Committee to revision the Feminist Theology Awards program is formed.
- 1999** Negotiations to sell UUWF’s N. Oxford property to the Barton Center for Diabetes Education, Inc. (formerly, the Camp Corporation) begin. Since Barton Center initially indicates it does not wish to continue operating the Birthplace Museum, a volunteer committee is formed to investigate other ways UUWF can ensure survival of the museum without re-assuming the responsibility of managing it.
- UUWF President Tina Jas hosts a Boston meeting of seven of UUWF’s 10 living past presidents: Drusilla Cummins, Denise Davidoff, Natalie Gulbrandsen, Clarise Jefferson, Arlene Johnson, Alice Kimball, and Phyllis Rickter. Their discussions identify three primary needs: increasing UUWF’s visibility, maintaining a strong women’s presence in the UUA, and the establishment of active, working linkages with other UU organizations.

- 2000** Revisioning of the Feminist Theology Awards is completed. The program's focus broadens and shifts from UU feminist theology to UU religious feminisms, to embrace a wider spectrum of people working in this area (womanists, ecofeminists, mujerista, etc.). The program's name is also changed to the Margaret Fuller Awards; the program's Selection Committee is empowered to commission works where it sees a need (in addition to selecting grant recipients).
- 2001** Margaret Fuller Awards program is launched at the UUWF Triennial with an intergenerational theatrical presentation, "Making Waves: Feminist Voices Speak."
- UUWF and the Barton Center reach agreement on terms of the sale of the North Oxford property; due to influence of the Town of Oxford, Barton Center accepts responsibility for ownership and continued operation of the Birthplace Museum. Attorney General's office approves transfer of camp and birthplace restricted funds to the Barton Center.
- 2002** UUWF board donates the proceeds of the sale of the N. Oxford property (\$200,000) to the UUA to form nucleus of a permanently restricted fund to benefit the UUWF Clara Barton Internship for Women's Issues, a program operated by the UUA's Washington Office for Advocacy. UUWF also agrees to assist UUA in raising a matching amount to complete this restricted fund.
- UUWF Board appoints a Restructuring Task Force: former Presidents Denise Davidoff, Arlene Johnson, and Phyllis Rickter, with board members Patsy Sherrill Madden and Justice Waidner.
- 2003** Supported by a grant from the Fund for Unitarian Universalism, UUWF hires a professional market research firm to conduct a survey of its members and other UUs regarding to identify their major issues and concerns to provide needed information to the Restructuring Task Force.
- 2004** UUWF accepts the Restructuring Task Force's recommendations and revised bylaws and calls a Special Membership Meeting during GA '04 in Long, Beach, CA, to vote on them. At that meeting, members vote to transform UUWF into an educational, advocacy and grants-giving organization, while remaining a membership organization.
- As a cost cutting measure, the new bylaws reduce the board from 12 to five members. These bylaws also create a UUWF Grants Program (later named the Equity and Justice Grants Program) the and institutionalize the Margaret Fuller Awards Program.

UUWF Grants Panel and Margaret Fuller Committee meet in September for joint training conducted by Hilary Goodrich, director of the UU Funding Office. UUWF Grants panel defines criteria for the new program and begins developing processes.

2005

Supported by a challenge grant from the Fund for Unitarian Universalism, UUWF works with design professionals to develop a brand identity. This work is completed in time to debut the new image at GA.

The grant also supports work of a financial development consultant hired to create an initial financial development plan. Recommendations include formation of a National Development Council to supplement fundraising by the board and the awarding of a pilot grant at GA, to illustrate the vision of the new UUWF Grants Program. In response, the UUWF board awards \$4,000 to Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom, a program of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

First funding cycle of the UUWF Grants Program begins with the October 15, 2005 deadline for grant proposals.

National Development Council (NDC) is formed and begins its work with an initial round of fundraising calls.

2006

Veatch Program awards UUWF a \$20,000 grant to support expansion of its fundraising capacity. First Leadership Breakfast held during GA.

Board revises bylaws to separate the position of Director of Development/Communications into two positions: Vice President/Development (who will also chair the NDC) and Vice President/Communications. Position of Vice President/Clerk is discontinued, with the office of clerk (required by Massachusetts law) assigned combined with the treasurer's position.

Three new board members are recruited to fill vacancies created by completion of three board members' terms.

2007

Veatch awards UUWF a second-year grant of \$25,000.

¹ Other Ministry to Women Award recipients have included May Sarton, Marian Wright Edelman, Tillie Olsen, Bernice Johnson Reagon, founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock; Dr. Jean Baker Miller, and Sarah Weddington and women from the First Unitarian Church in Dallas who supported her during Roe v Wade's early stages in the Texas courts.

² Origin of the Women and Religion resolution: The United Nations declared 1975 the International Year of Women, and held the first UN sponsored international U.N. Women's Conference in Mexico City. UUWF Life Member Lucile Schuck Longview attended the conference as a delegate of the International Association for Religious Freedom. During the conference she became very disturbed by the fact that religion was not included among the many issues and concerns affecting women that were discussed there: despite the fact that male-dominated religious practices have many profound and unfortunately often negative effects on the lives of women and girls. This inspired her to conceive and promote what was to become the Women and Religion Resolution adopted by the 1977 UUA General Assembly.