

The **Communicator**

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the newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation

Fall, 2002

UUWF at Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

By Phyllis Rickter

After many years of representing the UUWF at the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Dorothy Chapman, second president of the Federation, has retired. In October the UUWF board appointed Phyllis Rickter (also a past UUWF president) to fill that vacancy on the Coalition's Council of Governors, which is made up of a representative from each of the 37

member organizations of the Coalition.

The UUWF is one of the founding members of the Religious Coalition, now almost 30 years old. Those early women recognized, as we do, the importance of the religious voice in issues of reproductive choice.

At a June meeting in Washington, DC, Council members heard about the new programs of the Coalition and participated in planning for the future. Chaired by Hazel Groman, National Council of Jewish Women, the meeting began with self-introductions, welcomes from the officers and staff, and a review of the Council's role in the total organization.

The morning was spent in a roundtable review of the status of our issues in the various faith communities. Each organization has a particular focus, whether protection of *Roe v. Wade*, sexuality education, stem cell research, HIV-AIDS prevention, or emphasis on youth activities.

It is clear that the work of RCRC goes far

beyond the question of abortion only and includes all aspects of women's health and reproductive rights. The status of some denominations around these issues is quite secure; others feel threatened by current legislation around late term abortions, access to abortion services and denominational conflicts relating to lesbian/gay ordinations. The roundtable discussion revealed once again that the question of reproductive rights is extremely complex and includes a broad agenda.

The Religious Coalition is organized at the grassroots level in state affiliate organizations. The meeting stressed the importance of these affiliates, developing affiliates in more states, as well as collaboration with like-minded organizations. Communication between the national office and the affiliates is, as always, of vital importance.

During one afternoon of the meeting participants had the opportunity to lobby their congressional representatives and senators. Another

afternoon was spent reviewing the work of the Black Clergy Initiative (BCI), which began in 1996, and the materials available for sexuality education among youth. The 6th annual BCI Summit, held in July at Howard University Divinity School with over 500 participants, had a focus on three issues for black clergy: HIV-AIDS, teen pregnancy, and STDs. The new RCRC curriculum was specifically written for church-based sexuality education and has been well received and widely used.

In January 2002, the Coalition began a sexuality education program in Cape Town, South Africa, where HIV-AIDS threatens the future of that country and its people.

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Linda's Window

Church has been back on our calendars for about a month now, but parts of this issue of *the Communicator* will take us back to last June's GA in Quebec City. You'll also read about some changes we're going to attempt for the next couple of GAs. At our October board meeting we'll finalize plans for next year's GA in Boston and will begin work on GA and Triennial planning for Long Beach in 2004.

Having said all of that, and it is a full plate, we have a great opportunity

to impact the greater UU community and society as a whole: our attempt to find a way to endow an internship in the Washington office of the UUA. This internship would be dedicated to women's and gender issues. Much of the Executive Committee, as well as the task force working on this project, met with the Rev. Meg Riley, part of her staff, and Denny Davidoff (representing the UUA) at GA in Quebec City to talk about how we might accomplish this goal. We have a plan and we will be in more discussion

come the October board meeting. Meg and Denny will meet with us to determine how we can best partner our efforts to make this a successful project. With the sale last winter of the North Oxford property we have the funds to begin this effort and have considered naming the internship in the honor of Clara Barton and the UUWF.

I am extremely excited about this opportunity. This project would provide an enduring legacy for both Clara Barton and the UUWF.

The UUWF has a long history of social justice work and this internship would cement that legacy. If you have questions or comments about this project or anything, don't hesitate to call or e-mail me!

In faith,
Linda

Linda A. McAffrey was elected President of the UUWF at Triennial 2001. She lives in the north county St. Louis community of Ferguson.



Racine's Circle Reaches into the Community

By Jeanne Arnold

Bringing its woman-oriented spirituality out into the community for five years, Racine's WomanSpirit Faire and Bizarre, sponsored by the Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, features activities attuned to themes honoring Mother Earth, Native American concepts, ecology, nature religions, the Great Spirit and the Goddess.

Held on the first Sunday afternoon in May at the Flatiron Village Mall, this successful family event

with Maypole dancing, over 30 crafters, healers, jewelers, clothing vendors, tarot readers and an aura imager attract more people each year as they fill the neighborhood mall with woman-spirit energy.

Coordinator Sharon Burdick opens and closes the event with a ceremony calling the directions. "Ceremony gives us focus on the larger meaning of our Faire, bringing us together to celebrate women's creativity, our bodies, our spirit, our ancestors as well as the whole of our potential."

In 1982 women started gathering on full moons with Barbara Lindquist as its primary leader. After UU's "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" classes, a second group started at the church. Most of each circle were UUs so they merged and became stronger, a move that benefited all, including the church with new circle women finding a religious home at Olympia Brown, which is highly visible in the faire's considerable publicity and at the faire itself.

Winners Receive Memberships

Five names were drawn by UUWF Life Member Janet Nortrom at this year's GA in Quebec City. Each winner was awarded a one year individual membership. Congratulations to the following people, and welcome to the UU Women's Federation!

- ☞ Irene Baros-Johnson
Halifax, Canada
- ☞ Melissa Caminiti
Carrboro, NC
- ☞ Catherine Farmer
Riverside CA
- ☞ Dennis Landis
Brooklyn CT
- ☞ Karen L. Swinger
Yellow Springs OH

A Time to Heal

By Lucinda Pitcairn

When someone says “I’m taking some time to heal myself,” she or he is often speaking of spiritual or psychological healing. Several years ago I, too, spent time in healing myself, but in a more direct, or defined, way.

In early August of that year, my friend Terry and I were taking off in his little yellow Ercoupe plane when it crashed into tall trees on a mountain slope in the Mt. Shasta area. Miraculously, we lived and had the good fortune to be rescued from the wreckage in very short time.

Terry’s broken leg healed rapidly, but my fractured vertebrae required more time. After extensive surgery, involving a laminectomy,

spinal fusions and insertion of Harrington rods to stabilize the spine, I found myself weakened and confined to a plastic body jacket whenever upright.

While taking it easy, I had the opportunity to watch my body heal itself. I had had this opportunity on an almost daily basis all my life: a bad cold would “go away”, a bruise would fade, a scab would form over a scratch and fall off. But in the past I had hardly noticed these things. This time, however, with little else to think about, I was awed by the healing powers of my body.

At first it was watching the scratches and bruises fade from my arms and legs, as I lay in the hospital and rehab center.

Then it was finding movement returning to my inert left leg – at first, just the toes, then the ankle, thigh, and knee, and finally the entire leg. With the return of life to my leg came a growing ability to stand, then walk with a walker, and finally with a cane and even, for a few steps, unaided. All this mending must surely have represented much activity going on in my body, but I was unaware of it. It lay somewhere beyond my consciousness, silent and mysterious, like my digestive processes or breathing.

One day, about two months after the accident, we were driving up Route 128 to Fort Bragg for my physical therapy session, when I saw a stand of trees with pale golden leaves. When had that

happened and how? I had lost track of time during my recuperation and was startled, just as I had been when I found I could stand up safely in the shower, even with my cast on.

It was a reminder that the natural order of things prevails in this world. The healing in my body was part of the same order that brought about the golden leaves. This same order will prevail when the time comes, as it inevitably will, to die. Even as those same leaves eventually withered and dropped to the ground. Miraculously, that time had not yet come to me, although I had thought, as the plane crashed, that it had. And I had time to take for healing.



Revitalizing UU Women’s Groups

By Mary Junge

Wondering how this is possible in a time when women’s lives are more frenzied than ever? It’s easy if you help women find the close friendships they seek with like-minded UU women. And it’s easy if you help women find respite from the usual chaos of their lives. And it’s easy if you help women tap into their intelligence, spirituality, and creativity, thereby helping them to feel more centered.

Thanks to the UU Funding Program and the Association of Universalist Women (AUW) of First Universalist Church of Minneapolis, Dick Shelton and the Communications Committee of the Prairie Star District and other UU churches in the Twin Cities, successful programs and activities for women’s groups have been documented in a how-to manual that is now available online. You may find these resources at www.unitarian.org/auw. If you have further questions, please feel free to e-mail Mary Junge at mjunge@mn.rr.com. Good luck with your women’s group!

Home Alone, Female & Over 60

Report by Barbara Gardner from the General Assembly, Quebec, Canada, June 2002

This was a moderated discussion of the daily struggles of older women to meet their needs and deal with the financial hardships caused by divorce, widowhood and histories of low-paying jobs with no pensions. We viewed the video produced by WTTW in Chicago called, "When She Gets Old."

Introducing the topic, Betty Donaldson, brought our attention to the large number of older women living alone in their later years with minimal financial resources. Barbara Gardner gave the sociological overview.

The video showed a half dozen older women telling the ongoing problems they have trying to exist on Social Security payments monthly. They may or may not qualify for Medicare, with or without prescription assistance. Finding decent affordable housing is extremely difficult and depending on public transportation for all their trips to doctors, grocery stores, church and such is often a nightmare.

Men who worked longer years, at higher pay, often with benefits and

pensions fare much better financially although they often do worse emotionally because they never made friends and they have great trouble asking for any assistance.

After a few comments, questions and some answers, we broke into small groups to answer three questions.

1. How is your congregation dealing with the needs of the elderly?
2. What is your District doing to serve the elderly?
3. What do you think can be done, or what do you need as an elderly person?

One church has created Chalice Circles with neighborhood groupings that make a covenant with each other to call regularly and give help when someone needs it.

Helpers need to remember to call the shut-in and invite them to come along to the meeting or store instead of waiting for them to call when they need help.

People find it very difficult to ask for help, fearing it will be inconvenient or that the helper may say "no, I can't do it" and they'll be embarrassed and ashamed to be seeking help.

Watch out for bigotry of classism thinking "those poor people, they are not like us" – not educated enough or they're just too old to be interesting to us.

Another congregation has a Brown Bag Lunch monthly for people 55 years or over or who are handicapped in some way. They do some service projects each year and they serve as Caring Committee scouts for getting assistance for anyone who needs it.

In some areas there is a Shared Housing Registry that helps match up housemates who have a room to rent with another person who needs a place to live but cannot afford an average priced apartment. Sometimes there is an money exchange, but often the swap is yard work or housework for the living arrangement. Both people will benefit with this program. We were urged to participate in developing such programs if they're not available in our community.

One congregation serves First Sunday Pot Luck

lunch after the Sunday service with a donation being made if the person does not bring food to share. The money is then used to help those who need it to apply for Senior Transportation.

"We need more 'Tattle Tellers' who will let our Caring Committees know if someone is ill or in need."

It was noted that Finland and Sweden are building homes that are designed for shared housing. It

seems like we could look into that kind of service, too.

One woman urged all of us to go back to our areas and find out if there is a list of available social and health services that is readily available for Seniors. If there is not, we should be sure to do the research and create one for your city. It should include places like 24 Hour Pharmacies, Transportation, Food Stamps, Golden Diners cards, low income utilities availability, the Dept. on Aging and anything else you think might be helpful. This could be a great benefit to your community outreach, too.

We all need to develop a consciousness to ask for help when we need it. Most of us are bad at doing it because we
(Continued on page 5)

don't want to be seen as needing help or less capable than others. At this point one woman said, "We need more 'Tattle Tellers' who will let our Caring Committees know if someone is ill or in need."



Develop Zip Code Caring Networks where everyone makes a covenant with the others to call at least four times a year. Then hold a social event twice a year to stay connected, too.

Another resource brought up was the UU Affordable Housing Corporation that can help guide the development of a plan and help find funding for building affordable housing. You can contact Gladys Clearwater

through the UUA for more information.

The 40+ attendees were geographically mixed with both men and women participating with clergy plus lay people. Many of them commented that their consciousness had been raised about this issue and they intended to go home and check into what is available for the elderly in their area.

Requests for Proposals for 2004 GA Programming Are Available

By Patsy Sherrill Madden

Do you or your group have a suggestion for GA programming?

UUWF would like to give individuals and groups an opportunity to present their programs to an association wide-audience by sharing some of our five General Assembly program slots. To accomplish this we have developed a Request for Proposal for GA Programming, which we distributed at last June's GA in Quebec City and also to contacts of local UUWF groups in early September.

The proposals that came in as a result of this initial effort have been very exciting (look for more

information about them in upcoming issues of *the Communicator*). Due to the GA Planning Committee's schedule and the timing of our fall board meeting, we had to set an October 1 deadline for 2003 proposals. Proposal forms for GA 2004 (to be held June 25-28 in Long Beach, CA) are now available from the UUWF Office, and we're looking forward to seeing your ideas for workshops, worship services, panel discussions and performance pieces.

To obtain a Request for Proposal, contact the UUWF Office, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108; 617-948-4692; uuwf@uua.org.



Update on the 2002 Ministry to Women Award

The UUWF conferred the 2002 Ministry to Women Award on **Saira Shah**, freelance journalist and documentarian, for her dramatic production, "Inside Afghanistan: Beneath the Veil." Beneath the Veil was produced for Channel 4 in Great Britain and originally ran in the U.S. on CNN in August. UUWF also recognized CNN for

its prominent broadcast of this documentary and its continuing support of women who have important stories to tell.

Ms. Shah was unable to attend the ceremonies in Quebec City during General Assembly, as she is in the final stages of completing a book. Additionally, CNN was unable to accept the

invitation to send someone to accept on her behalf. Though Ms. Shah was not able to be present, she is honored to receive this prestigious award.

The UUWF is particularly moved by Ms. Shah's generosity. This award carries with it a \$1,000 honorarium, which she has donated in total to

Shelter Now International, a U.S. nonprofit organization that is building a school in Mawmaii (the home of the three little girls featured in both films). The UUWF is proud to have Saira Shah join our distinguished list of Ministry to Women Award recipients.

Milwaukee Guild Offers Timely Programming

By Janet Nortrom and Margery Sinclair, First Church Milwaukee

WOW! Womanspirit/Emerson Guild, First Church Milwaukee's UUWF Women's group provided so many timely programs since September 11, 2001. The passion of the women of the church got us involved with a candlelight service on September 11, then opened us to looking more globally, through the UUWF published curriculum "Rise Up and Call Her Name" introducing us to many cultures thought out the world.

Thank You!

We'd like to thank you for your enthusiastic response to our call for submissions for *the Communicator*, which we sent to our members through our group contacts last spring.

In this issue we were only able to use a fraction of the articles, essays,

We paused briefly and had a November meeting on "Women and Activism", and the Struggle For Peace, bringing forth speakers from the media and the Muslim Women's Coalition.

Our 7th Annual Victorian Holiday Tea brought together an intergenerational crowd of females with young girls, grandmothers, mothers friends relishing deserts and tea, singing holiday songs, collecting gifts for women's shelters and through the dramatic love of former work, the passion of Susan B.

photographs and poetry we received from UU women from all over the continent. At our upcoming board meeting we'll be discussing ways we might use the submissions we were unable to include on these pages.

Again, a heartfelt thank you!

Anthony's message reminded us that still more work needs to be done for women's rights.

Our love of Women's History had WomanSpirit hosting a Silver Tea in March during Women's History Month, when we were so honored to have the UU Women's Heritage Society's Photo Exhibit "Standing Before Us," adorning our walls during the first 10 days. Present at the tea was Denny Davidoff, former UUA Moderator and UUWF president who spoke in our Church's pulpit the following morning on the Holdeen Project, titled "No One But Us."

Our passion and attraction to the women of our faith lead us to the General Assembly in Quebec City, Canada, where so much inspiration came forth. A summer service titled "Women of Words: Food For thought From General Assembly Speakers" brought forth 4 GA women sharing excerpts from two UUWF GA programs, "Making Waves; Feminist Voices Speak" and "Home Alone, Female and Over 60", Stephen Lewis with the Ware Lecture, the GA Choir and other Social Justice inspirational talks.

Our fall 2002 programs again will show the

passion, wisdom and networking that takes place at GA. The September 28, 2002, program will include Carol Eagleheart, our UU Troubadour who will be singing her songs that touch the spirit, songs of love, of justice and of caring for the earth. The exciting Saturday workshop with Carole will be "Journey to the Goddess" then in the pulpit on Sunday, with "What Was Solomon's Secret"?

Our October 13 meeting, again gleaned from UUWF's "Home Alone" program, will also be enriched with UU Women financial and investment counselors to help ward off women alone in the future, inspired by the UUWF GA program and dialogue. We will get energized and network at our district UUWF Fall conference retreat at Lake Geneva joining with 100 plus UU women.

The passion, love, enthusiasm and desire to empower UU women in society and our faith abounds at our First Church Milwaukee's Womanspirit/Emerson Guild. Poets, authors, artisans, activists, musicians, mentors, mothers, daughters and friends are among our gifted women who gather to work for justice and celebrate women.



Barbara J. Collignon
Shorewood, WI

Poetry Sampler

Mother's Day, 2002

By Mary Junge, Eden Prairie, MN

Always different, always the same,
I watch a mother as she buttons
Her son's shirt, straightens his collar
Before the boy stands
To sing before a congregation.
The dull, troublesome ache of
Mother loss returns.
With sons older now, I recall
How I always zipped and buttoned
Their jackets and shirts in a hurry,
As if racing toward this moment.

The hand of age reaches for my face.
I can't know what it means to grow older,
Can't know what it means to die.
How little I have changed here – perhaps nothing,
Except for leaving these beautiful people
Who think of me as the one who dressed them,
Cared for them,
From a fountain they thought bottomless –
Never as a woman with dreams and longings,
As I never knew my mother.

*after the line, "Always different, always the same"
from Paul Zweig's poem, "Space is the Wake of
Time."*

Triptych

By Marlyn Swanson, Virginia, MN

Weary shawled women
Kneel before gilded icons
Glorifying God.

Aged rough fingers
Dutifully ease worn beads
Across wooden pews.

Glimmering candles
Illumine The bent image
Comforting the poor.

A New Prayer

By Barbara J. Collignon, Shorewood, WI

We invoke the One we call upon
in time of deep despair.
We seek the One who'd answer us,
respond to earnest prayer.
From this Source of Life we ask
Strength to meet an awesome task,
Courage in the face of fear,
Greater faith to persevere
For we must answer our own prayer.
We must rise to tend and care.
We must give and we must strive
To comfort, cure, embrace, revive.
Peace, so dear, now distant seems
And scenes of war now haunt our dreams.
So we unite to conquer fear,
Our homes protect,
Our hearts to cheer.
We pray for peace.
We pray for love
But seek not answers from above.
May we be the answer
To another's prayer.
Let us reach out and
Let us care.

Women Do

By Priscilla Hinckley, Amherst, MA

women do
the most extra-
ordinary things like turning
seeds into people don't laugh
that's a trick and a half, pushing that itty-
bitty nut into the cold dark earth guarding
it carefully protecting it from those who would
steal its water and its sun, then later in steaming heat she
gathers the fulsome harvest and drags it to the mill or
maybe just gets it home and pounds the living
daylights out of it in a wooden mortar and
then between fetching water, collecting
firewood, chasing children and
waiting on the old man, bakes
bread, afterwards to sit
quietly and chew
as life moves
within



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2002 Margaret Fuller Awards Are Presented

The creators of an exciting set of projects were honored at GA in June with the presentation of the 2002 Margaret Fuller Awards for Religious Feminisms.

This UUWF program provides grant funds to UUs working on projects that focus on any of the many thematic strands of UU feminist theology. The program seeks to fund accessible projects - meaning products that can be used by local congregations or other groups to further an

understanding of this subject area.

The Margaret Fuller Selection Committee reviewed 15 excellent applications and chose the following awardees:

- ☞ Beverly Anderson Forbes, Renton, WA, for her seminar and resource guide, **Remembering May Sarton.**
- ☞ Cathleen Cox McCarroll, Nicasio, CA, for her worship service/workshop

design project, **Arche-types of Feminisms: Claiming Our Whole Selves.**

- ☞ Barbara Schonborn, Westford, MA and Rosemary Matson, Carmel Valley, CA, for their curriculum, **Unraveling the Gender Knot, A Course for Adults and Senior Youth.**

The Selection Committee included Lynn Thomas, Palmer, MA, chair; the Rev. Elinor Artman, Highlands, NC; the Rev.

Marti Keller, Decatur, GA; Kirstie Lewis, Ph.D., Bellevue, WA; Phyllis Rickter, Arlington, MA.

Application guidelines for the 2003 awards are now available from the UUWF Office. Applications for the 2003 awards are due on or before February 3, 2003.

The Margaret Fuller Awards Program is the result of a revisioning of UUWF's Feminist Theology Awards Program.