

the Communicator

Volume 22, Issue 3

the newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation

Fall, 2004

UUWF's Radical Transformation Begins!

The historic vote of the June Special Membership Meeting, held in conjunction with General Assembly at Long Beach, CA, begins the transformation of UUWF from a direct services membership organization to a grant-giving and advocacy organization.

"Our members have resoundingly endorsed this radical transformation," said newly elected President Nancy W. Van Dyke in her address to the General Assembly. "From an organization people support in return for direct services, to a UUWF foundation which members join to support grant-making and

advocacy work. This is our blueprint for the future."

Actions of the Special Meeting included passage of revised bylaws that support the new organizational focus; election of a streamlined, 5-member Board of Trustees; and appointment of a five member grants panel (see page 2).

The Special Meeting drew proxies and attendees of nearly 300, well over the required quorum of 50. All but a handful of those voting were in favor of the bylaw changes and of the slate of candidates presented for the board.

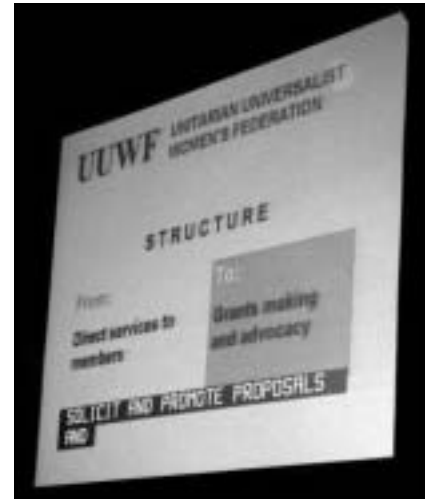


Photo courtesy of Rick Van Dyke

A slide from the PowerPoint presentation projected during UUWF President Nancy W. Van Dyke's report to the 2004 General Assembly.

\$50,000 Gift Honors Bernita Cogan Watt

UUWF is thrilled to announce that a \$50,000 gift to the UUWF Clara Barton Internship for Women's Issues has been given in honor of the late Bernita Cogan Watt by her husband, Howard Watt of Tempe, AZ; daughter Lory Cogan Utz; and son Jim Cogan.

According to the Rev. Dr. Laurel Hallman, Senior Minister at the First Unitarian Church in Dallas, "Bernita's family wanted to honor her commitment to the strengthening of women in their personal and public lives. This gift is a wonderful tribute to her spirit and to her commitments in life. Those of us who knew Bernita were fortunate indeed. We can

be doubly grateful that her work is continuing with this most generous gift."

Bernita served on the UUWF board from 1979-85, as secretary during her later terms, and later as chair of the Nominating Committee. After leaving the board she was the driving force behind the Southwest District women's successful efforts to raise funds for the study of UU feminist theology. That initiative resulted in the founding of the restricted UUWF fund that now supports the



Photo by Jones Photo

Bernita Cogan, recently honored with a donation from her family to the UUWF Clara Barton Internship for Women's Issues.

Margaret Fuller Awards in Religious Feminisms (see *Feminist Theology*, page 4).

The UUWF Clara Barton Internship for Women's Issues originated in 2002 with UUWF's gift of \$200,000 from the sale of the North Oxford, MA, site of the Clara Barton Birthplace and Camp. UUWF also committed to help the UUA raise an additional \$200,000 to complete the internship endowment. That effort is now within \$5,000 of that goal – if you would like to contribute, contact Rebecca Scott of the UUA Development Department, rscott@uua.org or 617-948-4648.

How does UUWF's transformation affect current members?

See page 2.

Welcome New UUWF Leadership

UUWF Board of Trustees

- *President*
Nancy Van Dyke, Sea Cliff, NY
- *Vice President/Clerk*
Rev. Danielle Di Bona, Onset, MA
- *Treasurer*
Barbara Prairie, Berea, KY
- *Development/Communications Director*
Arlene Johnson, Tulsa, OK
- *Grants Panel Chair*
Linda Lu Burciaga, Phoenix, AZ

UUWF Grants Panel

- Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley, Tampa, FL
- Rev. Elizabeth McMaster, Albuquerque, NM
- Janet Prince, New Castle, NH
- Justice Waidner, Tulsa, OK

Margaret Fuller Awards Panel

- Rev. Dr. Glenda Gray, Marietta, GA
- Rev. Marti Keller, Chair, Decatur, GA
- Kirstie Lewis, Ph.D., Bellevue, WA
- Phyllis Rickter, Arlington, MA

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A Message to Members

UUWF remains a membership organization open to all persons who support UUWF's mission and purposes and who make the annual minimum financial contribution established by the Board of Trustees.

In acknowledgement of the dedicated, long-time support of its cur-

rent membership, the new board has decided to retain the current group and individual member structures, dues rates, and renewal procedures during this first transition year. The yearly group renewal mailing is in process as this issue of *the Communicator* goes to press, and individual members will continue to receive their annual renewal notices.

First Steps Toward a New UUWF

The new Board of Trustees began implementing UUWF's transformation almost immediately after GA, communicating by telephone and e-mail during the early summer and convening for a first meeting August 27-29 in Boston.

Two organizational priorities emerged from this first meeting:

- **Effectively communicating UUWF's new focus to its members and the larger UU**

community. This will include development of a professionally designed organizational image that will reflect and represent UUWF's new direction.

- **Development of a financial development plan that will adequately support UUWF's grants making and advocacy.**

The board also planned strategies for interim communications and fundraising and for programming at GA 2005 in Ft. Worth.

UUWF Grants Panel Training

The UUWF Grants Panel met September 12-14 in Boston for an informative and productive training session with Hillary Goodridge, Director of the UU Funding Program. Joining them were members of the selection committee for the Margaret Fuller Awards program. The work focused on development of:

- a draft mission statement for the grants program (excerpt:

"...strives to advance equity for women and girls by making grants for bold and innovative projects that contribute to significant, positive social change.")

- funding criteria
- job descriptions for the panelists and chair
- several forms needed to begin the new and exciting grant making process

Thanks to the Restructuring Task Force

UUWF gratefully acknowledges the hard and dedicated work of the Restructuring Task Force, which has made the Federation's transformation possible.

- Patsy Sherrill Madden, Co-Chair, St. Louis, MO
- Phyllis Rickter, Co-Chair, Arlington, MA
- Denise T. Davidoff, Norwalk, CT
- Arlene Johnson, Tulsa, OK
- Justice Waidner, Tulsa, OK

UUWF at GA 2004: A Special Section

New President Shares UUWF's New Vision

In her speech to the 2004 General Assembly in Long Beach, newly elected President Nancy W. Van Dyke shared the story of UUWF's transformation, describing its origin at the Federation's 1998 membership meeting. "Panelists Denny Davidoff, Kay Montgomery, and Meg Riley exhorted us to think outside the box," she recalled. "To institutionalize our dreams."

This led to UUWF's first transformative act: the Board's decision to donate \$200,000 to fund the UUWF Clara Barton Internship for Women's Issues in the UUA Washington Of-

fice. "With the UUA's help," Nancy said, "we also began working to raise an additional \$200,000 for the internship endowment fund. UUWF was on the way!"

Thinking further outside the box, Nancy continued, led to the Board's appointment of a Restructuring Task Force, and to the research and survey process that culminated at the Special Membership Meeting held two days earlier at GA.

"At the meeting our members resoundingly endorsed this radical transformation," Nancy reported,

"from an organization people support in return for direct services, to a UUWF foundation which members join to support grant-making and advocacy work. This is our blueprint for the future."

In closing, Nancy thanked and paid tribute to the women who have supported UUWF over the years. "They have been with us all the way," she said. "I would like to thank especially the 2001-04 board and its president, Linda McAffrey. That board's decision to appoint the Restructuring Task Force has brought us to this moment."

How My Year in Washington Changed the World

Though relatively small, the goal of the UUA's Washington Office for Advocacy and its Social Justice Internship Program is to attempt what the title states: change the world. In this UUWF GA workshop, interns Kierstin Homblette, Megan Joiner and Amelia Rose, with Advocacy and Witness Director Meg Riley, reflected on the work of the previous year and their goals for the future.

Interns function as legislative assistants, representing the UUA and its positions to Congress and the White House. They also distribute the results of their legislative research to congregations, with tips and tools for effective advocacy and liberal religious witness.

The program provides a spiritual component: interns work with a minister on issue-based theological reflection, Unitarian Universalism values, and questions of faith. Weekly community service is also part of the interns' learning/serving experience.

Kierstin, the UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues, focused on this year's March for Women's Lives, characterizing it as a wonderful opportunity to meet many UUs who work on women's issues in their congregations.

Amelia, the Economic Justice intern, spoke of how her UU values inform her advocacy. Using the Global Fund to Fight AIDS as an example, Amelia outlined the process the Washington Office uses to evaluate its policy positions.

Megan, Civil and Human Rights intern, addressed Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression work and the ways the



Left-right: UUA Advocacy and Witness Director Meg Riley with interns Amelia Rose, Megan Joiner and Kierstin Homblette.

Photo courtesy of Kierstin Homblette

Washington Office incorporates this work into its daily operations.

Working in a faith-based organization in a secular and polarized Washington, she said, is a constant struggle for all of the interns, an experience that impacts on their work and view of the world.

For more information on the internship program, visit www.uua.org/uuawo and click on "Internships".

Clare Fischer Receives Margaret Fuller Award

This year's awards presentation featured reports on two completed projects, now available for distribution to congregations and individuals, and remarks by the 2004 award recipient, Dr. Clare Benedicks Fischer, Aurelia Henry Reinhardt Professor of Religion and Culture at the Starr King School for Ministry, Berkeley, CA.

Clare's project is "Spirituality of Work: A Feminist Liberal Religious Perspective," a book she plans to use as a resource for courses she teaches on work and vocation. Some material will reflect research and analysis that she has undertaken over a period of years. The book will first delineate her position with respect to an ethics of responsibility and its implications for our contemporary social justice work, and then address vision and actions in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.

Women's leadership in the context of work and vocation underpins her analysis, which will examine women such as Louisa May Alcott, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Dorothea Dix, Aurelia Reinhardt, Kay Jorgenson, and Carolyn McDade. "The book is completed by a short epilogue," Dr. Fischer wrote in her grant proposal, "that summarizes and indicates substantial ways the reader can join in the quest for a spirituality of work that embraces the dignity of every person."

At Starr King, Clare instructs a variety of courses, including Moral Commonwealth, Comparative Religious Studies, and Feminist Theory/Theology. Her commitment to feminism is long standing. More than 20 years ago she co-founded one of the first centers for women and religion, and she has published several bibliographies on women's



Photo courtesy of Dr. Kirstie Lewis

Left-right: Dr. Kirstie Lewis and Dr. Clare Benedicks Fischer

spirituality. Her doctoral thesis was on Simone Weil and Work Theology, and she is currently working on a book about Weil's theories of nonviolence. She also has strong research interest in the culture and religions of Indonesia and often travels in that region.

Clara was also an original member of the Selection Committee for the Feminist Theology Awards, predecessor of the Margaret Fuller Awards program.

Unraveling the Gender Knot

Dr. Barbara Schonborn discussed this new curriculum, which she created with colleagues Alison Campbell and Rosemary Matson. Based on the work of Dr. Allan Johnson (*The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*), the topics addressed in the course's seven, two-hour sessions include gender, religious, feminism, economics, invisibility and denial, and how to challenge the patriarchal system. Cur-

Feminist Theology and Margaret Fuller Awards – Some History

The Margaret Fuller Awards program originated when preparations for UUWF's 1985 Biennial Convention failed to identify a UU theme speaker who had published in the field of feminist theology. Bernita Cogan, then a member of the board, organized a fund-raising initiative in her Southwest District to begin to address this issue.

The original fundraising committee included Bernita, Margie Carter, Margaret Deininger, Mary Thomson, Carol (Gaddy) Graywing, and the Rev. Jean Rickard.

Beginning with a \$10,000 contribution honoring Claire White, second treasurer of the continental UUWF, the Southwest District women raised over \$40,000, which they then donated to the UUWF as a restricted endowment fund benefiting projects focusing on UU feminist theology.

Aided by a \$40,000 challenge grant from the Veatch Program of the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, UUWF continued raising funds for the endowment, surpassing the goal of \$100,000. The first grants were awarded in 1989; since then 34 projects have been funded for a total of more than \$50,000.

Projects have included books, conference programs, articles, songbooks, poetry, dramatic productions, videos, artistic showings, and curriculum materials.

In the late 1990s, the program was revisioned and renamed the Margaret Fuller Awards Program in Religious Feminisms.

(Continued on page 5)

UUWF at GA 2004: A Special Section

Are You the Opposite Gender or Am I?

Early Monday morning on the last day of GA, approximately 75 women and men answered this question by probing relevant experiences, activating their senses of humor, and suggesting ideas for future activism – all demonstrating a real commitment to developing a more humane world. Facilitators Dr.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Betty Donaldson

Left-right: Dr. Barbara Schonborn and Dr. Betty Donaldson

Betty Donaldson and Dr. Barbara Schonborn provided a meditation, encouraged sharing remembrances about gender awakening among small group members, and collated suggestions about how to bridge gender gaps. Taking the path of least resistance by making that all-important small

first step seemed to be the basic theme.

Presenter Dr. Betty Donaldson is an immediate past UUWF board member and professor on the Faculty of the University of Calgary. For information about Canadian perspectives on gender issues contact her at edonalds@ucalgary.ca.

Dr. Barbara Schonborn is co-creator of the new UU course, "Unraveling the Gender Knot, Challenging the System that Binds Us" – see *coverage of the Margaret Fuller Awards presentation on page 4 for more information on the curriculum.*

Margaret Fuller Awards, cont. from p. 4

riculum materials, designed for mixed groups of men, women and youth, were available throughout GA and interest has been high. Contact Barbara at Barbara.schonborn@stanfordalumni.org for more information and to purchase materials.

Women of Transylvania: A Video of Hope

The second completed project featured at the workshop was Laurie Simons' moving video, also available for purchase during GA and which generated much interest.

Half of this 20-minute video was screened during the seminar to a very enthusiastic audience. The documentary invites the viewer into a complex, other-worldly, yet somehow familiar community of

Transylvanian women and their daughters. It reveals many of the issues and challenges they face in a post-Communist nation: decreasing village population; poverty; unyielding physical labor; sending their children away to school; the burden of the roles and responsibilities they face as women; and the question of how their children can have a hopeful future.

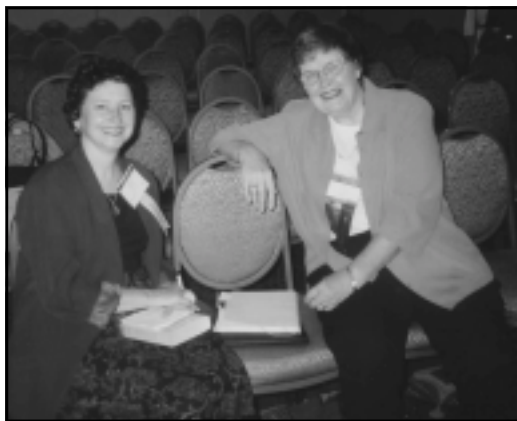


Photo courtesy of Dr. Kirstie Lewis

Left-right: Laurie Simons, creator of the "Women of Transylvania" video, with Beverly Forbes, a 2002 awardee for her project, "Remembering May Sarton."

Beautifully filmed and made with subtitles (so that the true voices of these women can be heard), the video is a must see for all UUs involved in partner church projects as well as by UUs and friends

interested in international issues that impact women. Contact Laurie at edvideplu@comcast.net or 425-889-8524 ext. #11 for more information and to purchase the video.



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**Your vote
does count!**
 UUs have joined with many
 faiths through the national
 Interfaith Alliance
 (www.interfaithalliance.org)
 to urge their members to
 make sure they **vote on
Tuesday, November 2.**
**Make your voice
heard - Vote Nov. 2!**

Making a Joyful Noise



Photo courtesy of Cymbal.

The UU music group Cymbal, which presented "She Changes Everything She Touches: Honoring Our Music," in a UUWF workshop slot at GA. Left-right: Linda Slabon, Diane Johns, Lynn Fisher McCanne, Toni Tollerud.

Cymbal is based in DeKalb, IL, and the group's music always conveys a message. They are suitable for educational programs, Sunday services, concerts, or teaching workshops. For more information, contact revslabon@aol.com.