



the communicator

THE NEWSLETTER OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN'S FEDERATION

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UU Community Responds to Katrina's Devastation

The catastrophic loss of life and displacement of over one million people in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama is mind-numbing. Women and children have been disproportionately impacted and the tragedy magnified by FEMA's painfully slow response and the blatant display of classism and racism unfolding in the daily media reports.

The UU community has been quick to respond. Visit uua.org – or call 1-888-792-5885 (toll free) for information on donating to the Gulf Coast Relief Fund, a joint UUA-UU Service Committee effort. As of October 11, the fund has raised \$2,052,115.

"Cakes" Author to Receive UUWF Award

The Rev. Shirley Ranck, author of the groundbreaking adult religious education curriculum, *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, will receive the 2006 Ministry to Women Award at the UUA General Assembly in June. Founded in 1974, this UUWF award honors individuals or organizations who have ministered to women in an outstanding manner.

Introducing UUWF's New Look!

In keeping with our transformation from a member services to a grant-giving organization, we thought it time to update our image. UUWF board and staff presented our new "look" in June at General Assembly in Fort Worth and received many compliments. In addition to the new logo and this new design for *the Communicator*, we have new brochures and banners. A new look for our website will be in place by the first of the year. Our thanks go to Ellen Spencer, UUWF Executive Administrator, and Arlene Johnson, Board Member for Communications and Development, for helping guide the process and writing and editing the copy. We also thank the Fund for Unitarian Universalism for providing partial funding for the initial stage of the design process.

www.uuwf.org

Spreading the Pro-Faith, Pro-Choice Message

By Amy Hetrick, Director, SYRF

A national program of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom (SYRF), educates, organizes and empowers youth and young adults to put their faith into action. Thanks to a generous grant from the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, SYRF will be able to promote the religious, pro-choice message to young people of all faiths on campuses across the nation. A small sampling of recent activities shows the amazing diversity of SYRF students and chapters.

- At the University of Georgia, SYRF co-sponsored a screening of the Dan Maguire video, "Sacred Choices: The Right to Contraception and Abortion in Ten World Religions."
- University of Texas students countered an anti-choice demonstration on campus with the assistance of SYRF's materials and affiliate network.
- Students at Truman State countered a misleading anti-choice insert in the college newspaper, with the help of a member of the RCRC Clergy for Choice Network.
- The SYRF chapter at Columbia University in New York hosted two popular events – a religion and reproductive rights panel discussion and speaker, Jane Roberts, of 34 Million Friends, to discuss the effort to fund international family planning.

New SYRF chapters at Hamline University, Augsburg College, Macalester College and the College of St. Benedict in Minnesota are progressing under the leadership of the Minnesota Religious Coalition's new outreach director, Reverend Eily Marlow. SYRF supporters at St. Benedict, a Catholic college, invited Minnesota RCRC director, Reverend Nadean Bishop, to speak on campus.

Located at the University of Missouri, our strongest SYRF chapter organized several successful events during the spring semester, including an event to promote emergency contraception, a lobby day in Jefferson City, several film screenings, and a panel discussion on women and religion with diverse religious groups including Buddhism and Hinduism.



Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

RCRC's Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom trains new activists from the post Roe v Wade generation and counters the religious right by developing educational materials and providing trainings on campuses and at conferences.

Thanks to the efforts of former United Methodist intern Jessica Arteaga and the staff of the Ohio Religious Coalition, Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland is the newest SYRF chapter.

A key part of SYRF's success is the active leadership of youth and young adults. That was important to Michael Oskin, a member of KESHER Reform Jewish College Students, in becoming involved with SYRF and joining the Youth Advisory Committee. "SYRF creates a forum for young people to express themselves, to question with a concerned group of peers, and to assert their rights and beliefs loudly and clearly."

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UUWF Awards \$4,000 to Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom

To launch its exciting new grants program, the UUWF Board has chosen to celebrate the work of Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom, a project of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, with a special \$4,000 grant.

Although independent of the Grant's Program's process, the award is very much in the spirit of its mission and focuses on reproductive choice – a leading social justice issue among the UU women polled in our market survey.

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Nancy W. Van Dyke
UUWF President

A Message from the UUWF President

The board's enthusiasm after our late August meeting in Boston was soon overshadowed by the tragedies unfolding around hurricane Katrina. These horrific events call for action, and I know that many of you have already responded with donations to the UUA-UUSC's Gulf Coast Relief Fund. You can also check our listserve (visit uuwf.org to subscribe) where women are sharing ideas, feelings and stories. To our friends and kinfolk on the Gulf Coast, our hearts and prayers are with you as you rebuild your lives.

Board Meeting Highlights

The board affirmed the Margaret Fuller Awards Committee's appointment of Rev. Tracy Sprowls-Jenks, Ridgeway, NJ, to the committee to replace the Rev. Dr. Glenda Gray, who had completed her term. We thank Glenda for her good work and welcome Tracy to our UUWF volunteer family.

We were also pleased to have Judy Pickett, Dayton, OH, with us in Boston. Judy is Chair of our new National Development Council, with Dr. Barbara Brown, Glencoe, MO, serving as Vice-Chair. This committee will soon start working to ensure that our Grants Program will be adequately funded and that we can properly represent your social justice interests.

Board members also met with staff from the UU Service Committee and agreed to join them as an official sponsor of their Call For Justice Weekend in Washington in September.



Left to Right: Incoming UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues Meredith Schonfeld-Hicks, with Nancy W. Van Dyke and outgoing intern Kierstin Homblette.



Transylvanian Women's Association President Eniko Ferenczi, with former UUWF board member Barbara Gardner

General Assembly Notes

Our \$4,000 award to Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom, presented at GA, was accompanied by another event focussing on reproductive choice: our Ministry to Women Award. This year we honored Sarah Weddington, lead attorney for *Roe v Wade*, and the women of the Women's Alliance at the First UU Church of Dallas, who supported Sarah's efforts. The timing could not be more pertinent, when we are now facing the appointment of two Supreme Court Justices and women's rights are in increasing peril.

At GA we also had an opportunity to bid farewell to Kierstin Homblette, our first UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues, and to welcome her successor, Meredith Schonfeld-Hicks. Kierstin – who has been accepted for service in the Peace Corps – did an outstanding job and we are confident that Meredith will continue to fulfill the vision we had when founding the internship program in the UUA's Washington Office.

Another important connection at GA was the presence of Eniko Ferenczi, President of the Transylvanian Women's Association, at several of our events. Eniko has played a key role in helping us aid widows of Transylvanian Unitarian ministers with income from our Lanning Fund, which benefits the widows and daughters of deceased UU ministers. Eniko brought greetings and handmade needlework gifts from TWA members, and we look forward to deepening the relationship we have established with them.

In Sisterhood,
Nancy W. Van Dyke
UUWF President

Judy Pickett Appointed to National Development Council

Judy Pickett was recently appointed by the UUWF Board to chair the UUWF National Development Council (NDC) to help raise funds for grants and grant administration. The UU Women's Federation will disburse grant funds later this year for projects that empower women and girls and that directly involve UU women.

Judy is a 3rd generation Universalist and has been active in the UUA for most of her adult life. She has served on the UUA Board of Trustees, chaired the Finance Committee and most recently retired after 8 years as Chair of the Annual Program Fund. Her leadership experience includes stints as Secretary, Treasurer and President of her home congregation, Miami

Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Dayton, OH, as well as similar positions for the Ohio Valley UU District (now the Heartland District).

As Chair of the NDC Judy is committed to creating a cadre of women who are as passionate as she is about money and the great good it can do to further the causes of women everywhere. "My current focus is on recruiting 5 or 6 of you who can work with me initially to launch our fundraising efforts to benefit the Grants Program," Judy commented. "I have promised the Board that we will raise \$10,000 by the end of the calendar year. Can any of you help me make it happen? Yes, you can!"



Judy Pickett

If you are willing to help, or curious about what the NDC will be doing, or want to know where to send your check, please contact Judy at judypickett@sbcglobal.net or 937-572-7376.

"We're on a fantastic journey together and the road is paved with riches."

The UUA and the Supreme Court Vacancies

"There is no more important decision for protecting the rights and freedom of every American than choosing a Supreme Court Justice. Appointed for life, Supreme Court Justices have the final say in determining our rights under the Constitution. Their decisions affect us all, every day. Only nominees who clearly and convincingly demonstrate that they are qualified merit confirmation."

— from the website of the Coalition for a Fair and Independent Judiciary.

With the confirmation of Chief Justice John Roberts, Congressional hearings on the nomination of White House Counsel Harriet Miers are just ahead. What is the position of our religious community on this process?

The Unitarian Universalist Association is authorized under the 2004 Statement of Conscience on Civil Liberties to "oppose nominees to the federal appeals courts or the Supreme Court whose records demonstrate insensitivity to the protection of civil liberties." This statement of conscience builds upon previous UUA social witness statements on civil liberties and was adopted unanimously by delegates to the 2004 General Assembly, following two years of congregational study, action, and reflection.

This is new ground for the UUA and for the staff of the UUA Washington Office for Advocacy. Director Rob Keithan and Program Associate Megan Joiner have been working closely with the Coalition for a Fair and Independent Judiciary (www.independentcourt.org) in addition to grassroots and religious task forces of the coalition.

If you or members of your congregation are interested in taking further action on the nomination of Harriet Miers, please contact Megan Joiner at mjoiner@uua.org or 202-296-4672 x12.

Spreading the Pro-Faith, Pro-Choice Message

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Sarah Gillespie is a new member of the Youth Advisory Committee. A United Methodist, Sarah became an intern at RCRC last year to learn more about her two passions, faith and public health. She says, "Now is the time for young people of faith, who are filled with spiritual curiosity and convictions, to stand up for themselves and, more importantly, for those who are unable to stand – women in

developing and developed countries all over the world who are prevented by harsh policies and rampant discrimination from receiving the reproductive and family planning services they need to survive."

For more information about SYRF or to help start a chapter in your community, please visit www.syrf.org or contact the SYRF Program Manager at info@syrf.org / 202-628-7700x15.

UUWF at GA 2006

Five workshops and the 2006 Ministry to Women Award reception and presentation highlighted UUWF events at the UUA General Assembly in Fort Worth in June.



Denise T. Davidoff

Former UUWF president and UUA moderator Denny Davidoff keyed the Annual Meeting, where she praised the Federation's progress in transforming itself into a grant-giving and advocacy organization. This event also

marked the formal presentation of the \$4,000 pilot grant to the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice's program, Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom.

The Margaret Fuller Awards Committee presented two workshops showcasing diverse MFA grant projects. The Rev. Marti Keller, committee chair, presented "May Sarton: Radical Lessons for Life," featuring Beverly Anderson Forbes' rich series of booklets on the life and spirituality of this poet and novelist, whom we claim as a fellow UU. More than 100 people attended this session, which combined an overview of Sarton's life and work with experiential small group discussion of Sarton's admonitions and observations on life, women, our society, and our larger community. Beverly's booklets, partially funded by a Margaret Fuller Award, include study guides for congregational workshops or ongoing groups and should be available for purchase by early 2006.

"What exactly are Religious Feminisms?" provided attendees with an opportunity to hear from the 2005 project awardees: the UU Church of Little Rock Arkansas, for its "Pray for Peace Day" project and the River Road UU Church, Bethesda, MD and the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual for "Seasons of Survival: Rituals for Women with Breast Cancer." In small group discussion, panelists and workshop participants considered the definition(s) of religious feminisms.



Other UUWF workshops were

"Young Women of Color Dialogue with Their Parents," a panel discussion among four young women and their mothers of what it means to be a young woman of color and Unitarian Universalist. These articulate young women talked about the joys of having a faith community that allows them to grow both spiritually and as leaders. The panelists' conversation also addressed the difficulties of being both young and of color in our UU congregations and larger UU world.

"Breakthrough: Approaching Women's Rights through Popular Culture," was done in collaboration with the Holdeen India Program, and featured Mallika Dutt, Executive Director of Breakthrough, an international organization that promotes public awareness of human rights and social justice through education and popular culture. This workshop's focus was Breakthrough's process in developing an advertising campaign in India around women and HIV/AIDS. Maillika described

how the culture in India informed the direction that this campaign took in order to speak to its audience.

This year's Ministry to Women Award honored Sarah Weddington, lead attorney for *Roe v Wade*, as well as the women from the Alliance of the First Unitarian Church in Dallas who became the third party to this ground-breaking class action lawsuit when they signed an *amicus curiae* brief in 1970. The award was presented at a reception during GA, and although Sarah was unable to be present, four of the Dallas women were able to take part in the celebration. Linda Coffee, Pat Cookston Davidson, Mary Lou Hoffman and Virginia Whitehill shared memories of their pro-choice work in the early 1970s and the other Alliance women who were involved: Patricia White Judd, Ellen Kalina Lewis, Rona Mears and Doris Middleton. Accepting the award on Sarah's behalf was former UUWF vice-president Patsy Sherrill Madden, whose sister, Martha Davis, was Sarah's law clerk during *Roe v Wade*.



Sarah Weddington



Patricia Judd



Rona Mears

Top left photo: Rev. Laurel Hallman, minister of the First Unitarian Church, Dallas, at the Ministry to Women Award reception with four of the women from the church's Alliance who supported *Roe v Wade* during its early stages. **Left to right:** Virginia Whitehill, Mary Lou Hoffman, Pat Cookston Davidson, Rev. Hallman, Linda Coffee. The award also honored Sarah Weddington, lead attorney for the case. Other Dallas Alliance women honored included Patricia Judd and Rona Mears.

Thanking Our Contributors

We want to thank our many donors, who believe in our mission of advancing justice for women through education and advocacy and have generously supported our efforts January 1 through July 31 of this year.

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UU Women

*Advancing justice for women
through education and advocacy*

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Quilts for Katrina Victims

Earlier this month members of the First UU Church of Milwaukee's UUWF-affiliated Womanspirit Group gathered to make quilts for Hurricane Katrina evacuees who came to Milwaukee and were housed at our State Fair Park group dormitory. Women and girls tied about 30 quilts while Denise Cawley and Nina Davis, Womanspirit members and professional quilters, sewed the edges to complete them. Denise has assisted in making more than 80 quilts for the Salvation Army to donate to families who are going into more permanent housing after leaving State Fair Park. Some of her customers, members of our church, and the Wisconsin Designer Crafters Council have volunteered about 350 hours of time, hundreds of dollars worth of materials and in kind fabric donations to this effort.

We added a pocket with a button to each of our quilts as a symbolic form of privacy for those in shelters, attached a label with inspirational quotes to the back, and put a note of encouragement in each adult quilt. We also made baby and child sized quilts, but while there are many organizations that make baby quilts, fewer quilts sewn with love are donated to men and women. Our First Church Common Room looked so colorful, with quilts covering large tables and many loving hands working on this project, hoping to make humankind a bit warmer. — *Janet Nortrom, Womanspirit member and former UUWF board member*