



the communicator

THE NEWSLETTER OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN'S FEDERATION

UUWF Receives Veatch Grant

The Veatch Program of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, NY, has awarded a \$20,000 grant to UUWF. The grant is for general support and was awarded in recognition of the Federation's role in furthering and strengthening the goals of Unitarian Universalism. The UUWF Board of Trustees has designated half these funds money for use on web design and half on bolstering our development work and our member-donor base.

UUWF Joins Katrina Relief Effort

The UUWF board has voted to collaborate with several UU organizations and congregations working on the Katrina relief efforts along the Gulf Coast. Specifically, we have agreed to partner with Project Hope, a relief program helping women and children in St. Bernard's Parish, New Orleans. It is an interracial, working class community that at one point was under 15 feet of water. We are currently exploring ways to provide assistance to the staff and clients of Project Hope. The needs are still great despite the efforts of other faith groups, the American Red Cross, Oxfam and FEMA in the region. We hope to have more specifics at our GA booth in St. Louis and will keep you updated.

Health Care Program Available for UU Congregations, Organizations

The Unitarian Universalist Association now offers a new self-funded, not-for-profit health care program for those employed (at least 1,000 hours per year) by UU congregations and related organizations. This will make it possible for congregations to more easily take responsibility for viable health insurance programs for their eligible staff. Development of this plan was prompted by the fact that hundreds of ministers and staff who work for UU congregations are without any health insurance, and that congregations are finding plans from commercial insurance carriers becoming more costly every year. For more information, go to www.uua.org.

How *Cakes* Came to Be

By Rev. Marti Keller
Decatur, GA

As a parish minister for several congregations and a chaplain for the annual UU Womenspirit gatherings at The Mountain in Highland, NC, I can personally testify to the continued impact of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, the groundbreaking, adult religious education curriculum.

Whenever candles (and chalices) are lit in our worship, chairs drawn up in a semi-circle instead of in rows; whenever directions are called, or the female names for divinity are invoked, the influence of *Cakes*, originally published in 1986, is still powerful.

Written by Rev. Shirley Ranck, this ten-session seminar in feminist theology was originally a boxed set of lessons plans, a collection of readings, songs and other resources, and film strips with illustrations of ancient goddesses. The creation of the program, a specific project on women's religious history, was one of several actions taken to implement the resolution on Women and Religion, adopted by the 1977 UUA General Assembly.

Out of print and not widely available to a new generation of liberal religious women and men, it is now being given a deserved resurrection and republication by Unitarian Universalist Women and Religion, with the assistance of a \$5,000 grant from our UUWF Grants Program. Goddess images from all over the world are being collected and will be displayed at the 2006 General Assembly in St. Louis in anticipation of the new edition, scheduled for publication in 2007. The book based on the course, first published in 1995, is also being republished and will be available at this summer's assembly.

UUWF will honor Shirley during GA with our 2006 Ministry to Women Award, which is given to individuals or organizations who have ministered to women in an outstanding manner.

Shirley, who has been serving as the interim minister of the Williamsburg, VA, UU



Rev. Shirley Ranck, Ph.D., will be presented with UUWF's 2006 Ministry to Women Award at General Assembly. The author of the adult religious education curriculum *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, Shirley is being honored on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of its publication.

congregation, was also honored by her ministerial colleagues in the Southeast UU Ministers Association chapter this spring, sharing her personal odyssey.

In an oral history interview with Rev. Elinor Artman, whose contributions to the original curriculum included researching and cataloging photographs used in the film strips and poems depicting Old Testament stories from women's perspective, Shirley recalled the beginnings of her work in this area.

At the time, she was a student at Starr King School for the Ministry. "(Since) I didn't have any required courses to take, I decided to study women and their religious history, in as much as it was there to be studied," Shirley said. "So I got involved in collecting slides of ancient goddesses and in trying to dig out the history of women and religion."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

UUWF Board of Trustees

President

Nancy Van Dyke, Sea Cliff, NY
nvdeap@optonline.net

Vice President/Clerk

Rev. Danielle Di Bona, Thomaston, ME
revdani@verizon.net

Treasurer

Barbara Prairie, Berea, KY
bprairie@adelphia.net

Development/Communications Director

Arlene Johnson, Tulsa, OK
AJohnsonPR@aol.com

Grants Panel Chair

Linda Lu Burciaga, Newburyport, MA
LLDaffodil@comcast.net

The Communicator is published four times a year by the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation and is distributed to members and other supporters in the UU community. Next issue: May 2006.

UUWF Office
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

617-948-4692 – tel
uufw@uua.org – email
www.uufw.org – web

Ellen Spencer
Executive Administrator
espencer@uua.org

Denny and Jerry Davidoff Honored



Jerry and Denny Davidoff, recipients of the 2006 Distinguished Service Award to the Cause of Unitarian Universalism.

Past UUWF President and UUA Moderator Denny Davidoff and her husband, Jerry Davidoff, will receive the UUA's 2006 Distinguished Service Award to the Cause of Unitarian Universalism at the upcoming General Assembly.

One of the most prestigious awards given by the UUA, this award honors those who have, over a considerable length of time, strengthened UU institutions or clarified the Unitarian Universalist message in an extraordinary way. The award is being given to Denny and Jerry for their independent contributions to Unitarian Universalism (as opposed to honoring them jointly, as a couple).

Denny and Jerry have indeed performed extraordinary acts of service to Unitarian Universalism over a considerable length of time.

Denny's UU volunteer career began in 1973 when she was elected to the UU Women's Federation Board, which she went on to serve as treasurer and president. After leaving the UUWF presidency in 1985, she was elected to the General Assembly Planning Committee and served as its chair from 1987 to 1989. That year she was elected a Trustee-at-Large to the UUA Board of Trustees and, four years later, she was elected Moderator and remained in that position for two terms, completing her service in 2001.

Her other UU volunteer work has included service as chair of the Partner Church Council's Task Force on Economic Fairness and Awareness and on the UUWF's Restructuring Task Force. Currently, she is a member of the Meadville/Lombard Theological School Board and chair of the board of the Church of the Larger Fellowship.

The focus of Jerry's UU volunteer work been service on several key UUA committees. He served for eight years on the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, which is nationally responsible for credentialing ministers, and, when necessary, disciplining them. During his six-year term on the Commission on Appraisal – charged with reviewing UUA functions or activities which in the Commission's judgment would benefit from independent review – he co-authored *Our Professional Ministry*, a study of the gatekeeping functions of the UU ministry.

Jerry also served as chair of the Election Campaign Practices Committee, which is concerned with monitoring and mediating between candidates in contested denominational elections and as chair of the Election Review Committee, which recommends improvements to denominational election campaigns.

Denny and Jerry have been active members of The Unitarian Church in Westport, CT, for over forty years. They live in nearby Norwalk and are in their fifty-first year of marriage.

E-Mail Addresses Wanted

As part of our efforts to expand our capacity for immediate communication with members, UUWF is collecting e-mail addresses. To place your address on our growing list, send an e-mail to espencer@uua.org. In the subject line, put "Email Address." In the message, type your full name, complete address and phone number and, on a line by itself, your e-mail address.

Please be assured that we will not sell or release your e-mail address to advertisers. Thank you for your help with this.

UUWF Intern's Work Focuses on Reproductive Rights, Violence Against Women

By Meredith Schonfeld-Hicks
UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues

Since writing to you in March, my legislative work has covered a variety of issues, including access to emergency contraception, the Violence Against Women Act and opposing the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito.

I also helped organize an interfaith worship and legislative briefing to celebrate International Women's Day. We highlighted the important contributions of women and worked to increase support for the Focus On Family Health Worldwide Act, which provides increased funding for international family planning programs.

Through a partnership between the Unitarian Universalist Association, the United Church of Christ and Advocates for Youth, we recently hosted our second annual Sexuality Education Advocacy Training. We brought together 30 UU and UCC youth, young adults, and adult allies to learn how to be effective religious advocates for comprehensive sexuality education.

It was an intense, four-day training, which included lobby visits on Capitol Hill. This training was transformative for many participants, including myself: it increased my confidence and ability to speak out for justice issues as a person of faith.

My weekly theological reflections continue to help me grow spiritually. This spring I also helped organize a worship service at the UU Fellowship of Southern Maryland, where I delivered my first sermon, "Making the Connection: UU Principles and Social Justice." My volunteer work includes service as a medical interpreter at a free clinic in my neighborhood.

I invite you to read my online journal - www.meredithindc.blogspot.com - and in closing, I'd like to share with you my May 5 posting:

"The rally this past weekend was amazing. It was really intense to come together with so many people to show support for the people in Darfur. I had the wonderful opportunity to meet and work with four Sudanese people who were in Washington, DC, to work with the UU Service Committee. They each had a different background (doctor, government official, U.N., and women's issues) and their stories varied. Some were still living in Sudan, others now live elsewhere, but they

all brought such life to the issue as their thoughts, concerns and experiences became more vivid, enhancing the need for action.

One of the women lived in Canada and was working on gender justice issues. She stressed the fact that women were suffering in the camps, weren't able to provide for their families, could be raped if they left to gather firewood, and had little-to-no mobility. They all touched on the issue of rape and how it was affecting the women and all people involved: the children, those who were forced to watch, and the children resulting from these violations.

It was truly an honor to have a chance to get this inside perspective as it removed my feelings of alienation from the issue and gave me more concrete thoughts and actions to pursue, in addition to a better understanding of global women's issues, poverty and genocide.

Several Sudanese women were in the office today when news of the peace agreement was read out loud. It was a gift to be able to share that moment of joy with them. They still stressed the importance of accountability and the need for U.N. guidance and support. A signed peace of paper



Participants in the recent second-annual Sexuality Education Advocacy Training take a breather before beginning the lobbying that was part of the training. With others in the UUA Washington Office, Meredith Schonfeld-Hicks (l), UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues, helped host the event.

means nothing when there is still poverty and unaddressed issues.

I hope the situation in Darfur will be resolved quickly and peacefully so more people need not die and their families suffer."

The UUWF Clara Barton Internship for Women's Issues in the UUA's Washington Office for Advocacy was founded with a \$200,000 donation from the UUWF, which helped raise a matching amount to form a permanent endowment for the program.



The full complement of enthusiastic participants in the Sexuality Education Advocacy Training, a partnership effort of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the United Church of Christ, and Advocates for Youth.

In Praise of *Cakes*

As part of the preparations for presentation of our Ministry to Women Award to Rev. Shirley Ranck, UUWF has invited members to write brief messages to her about what *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven* has meant to them. We are compiling these in a commemorative album we will present to Shirley at the award reception.

If you would like to become part of this effort, please write or type your message on a greeting card (or a sheet of paper no larger than 5½ x 8½) and send it to: UUWF Cakes Project, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108. Messages received too late to be included in the album presented to Shirley at GA will become part of Volume II and sent to her during the summer.

The following are excerpts from some of the messages we have received so far:

- § *Cakes* changed my life and set my feet on a path of spirituality. Each month a friend and I offer a ritual to our church, which we would not be doing if we had not taken it.
- § Thank you for your liberating view of women's pilgrimage in life and its unique way of being human in this world of inhumanity and violence. Your spirit sings and we rejoice that we are part of the chorus!
- § I am so pleased that you will be presented with the Ministry to Women Award at GA this year. It is greatly deserved. I took the *Cakes* classes years ago and was very impressed with the program and its breathe of coverage of the Goddesses.

§ I thank you and honor you.

- § Men too, appreciate your great contribution to our religious enlightenment.
- § How to thank someone for connecting me to my spiritual life isn't easy. I was in the first *Cakes* test group, drawn by a *UU World* ad asking if I'd ever thought of a feminine God. The experience changed my life. Since I brought the curriculum back home to share, even years later I'm still reminded often by those touched by your deeply insightful work - it bridges the ancient religious beliefs with feminine experience supporting the journey. There are no words for the connection your gift has brought to so many.
- § Your work has changed the world! Thank you!
- § Until I took your course, I was unaware of the goddess aspect of history. It gave me a better perspective of women's place in religion before patriarchy.

- § *Cakes* opened my mind to ideas I'd have never discussed otherwise. Thank you for your creation.
- § Thank you for the gift of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven!* I recall with great pleasure those days of sitting in the circle with women and the excitement we all had about the *Cakes* material which was so new to us all. I'm looking today for something new to bring back that enthusiasm and energy.
- § *Cakes* changed my life and led to my entering the UU ministry. I'll be forever grateful.

§ I was active with a group of women belonging to a fellowship in Ohio when they studied *Cakes*... the material was something so new and stimulating for us. We enjoyed it very much. I saved my material. A new group is organizing so I was very glad I could give it to them. Thank you for writing such a helpful curriculum.

§ *Cakes* was a significant part of my UU spiritual journey. I found the goddess within, and continue to be made joyful for the goddess I meet in each woman. Thank you, Reverend Ranck!

How *Cakes* Came to Be

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

While working as a secretary at the Graduate Theological Union after finishing at Starr King, she had a conversation with Jacob Needleman, who had been given a substantial grant to study new religious movements. He used some of these funds to commission Shirley to write a paper and teach a course "on goddesses and female imagery and Judaism and Christianity and whatever I could put together." This led to a course in feminist theology (from *thea*, the Greek word for goddess) and the eventual creation of the *Cakes* program.

Rev. Leslie A. Westbrook, then the UUA consultant for Adult Programs and Minister for Women and Religion, called and told Shirley that the UUA needed a study guide "so that people in congregations can do what the resolution calls for, which is to examine our theologies and practices and root out all the sexism," Shirley recalled. "She said: 'would you like to write the guide?' I said, 'Oh? I'd love to do it.'"

What was going to be a little study guide grew into a curriculum kit that took five years to research, develop, write and publish. Significantly, each session of *Cakes* included an opening focusing ritual: lighting a candle and reading one or more poems.

This practice is one of the contributions that Shirley Ranck and other women have made to UU worship.

Women who had experienced the course, "picked it up and made changes in the worship life of their own congregations out of a need for personalizing the services with a little more ritual," Shirley observed. There was a need for more than a lecture and discussion: not going back to a traditional Christian liturgy, but incorporating the new women's rituals that were emerging.

What are the feminist curricula needed for 21st century?

While there is still research to be done and courses to be written that teach and reclaim women's religious history in more pluralistic ways, what is also missing are some of the emerging personal issues. These range from the pre-occupation with appearance that has led to eating disorders and breast implants to "power as an issue," Shirley said. "And how do we make our way as women?"

Rev. Marti Keller is the Social Justice Coordinator for the UU Congregation of Atlanta and chair of UUWF's Margaret Fuller Awards Committee.

Building Bridges Across Our Differences: "Womanspirit, Sisterspirit" at GA

By Dr. Nancy Vedder-Shults
Madison, WI

*"Womanspirit, wise in spirit, free our minds,
Sisterspirit, rise in spirit, free our hands.
Make the world as we perceive it,
Change ourselves as we believe it,
Womanspirit, sisterspirit, hand in hand."*

-- Music by Nancy Vedder-Shults
Lyrics by Farrell Collins



Dr. Sharon Welch (l) is a panelist for the "Womanspirit, Sisterspirit" workshop that Dr. Nancy Vedder-Shults (r) will facilitate at GA. Nancy was awarded a UUWF program slot as part of our efforts to make GA programming available to women at the grassroots level who might not otherwise have access to them. Contact the UUWF Office for guidelines for applying for a slot at GA 2007.

As UU women, we often build bridges, not least of all among ourselves. We work for the same goals from a variety of perspectives, coming as we do from different spiritual paths as well as along a spectrum of color, sexual orientation and age.

I believe our differences can be our strength but only if we know how to work together, knowledgeably and respectfully. Then we can evolve our feminist spirituality to take action effectively for social justice.

Since we in the UUWF represent many faiths, this question has great significance for us. That's why I'm excited about the panel discussion I will be facilitating at GA this year. It brings together four women from four different religious perspectives who know how to build bridges

between our differences, women who feel strongly about feminism and interfaith work.

Dr. Sharon Welch, professor and chair of the Religious Studies Department at the University of Missouri-Columbia, has spent years thinking about the topics we want to discuss, most recently looking at peacemaking in a variety of religious traditions.

Rev. Monica L. Cummings was involved in interfaith work at the Bucks County, PA, church and is now furthering immigrant rights while serving her congregation in Los Angeles. She has also been a part of the Journey Towards Wholeness Committee, helping the UU movement deal with institutionalized racism. Rev. Melanie Morel-Ensminger, has engaged in interfaith worship and fellowship as well as social justice in her Cherry Hill, NJ, congregation and before that in Chattanooga, TN, and Auckland, New Zealand.

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

UUWF Events at GA 2006

Please refer to the GA program for locations.

Thursday, June 22

8 a.m. ~ Exploring Womanist Theology

Womanist theology comes out of the African American and Christian tradition. This panel of womanist theologians will discuss 21st century Womanist theology and Unitarian Universalism.

Speakers: Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley, Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt

9:45 a.m. ~ Young Adult Activism for Reproductive Justice

In the spirit of its mission, UUWF supports Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom, a youth/young adult program of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and the UUWF Clara Barton Internship at UUA's Washington Office. Learn how these programs educate, organize and empower young leaders in the religious reproductive justice movement.

Speakers: Meredith Schonfeld-Hicks, UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues

Friday, June 23

11 a.m. ~ Womanspirit, Sisterspirit: Towards Right Relationship Among Ourselves

See accompanying article for description. Speakers: Dr. Sharon D. Welch, Monica L. Cummings, Rev. Melanie Morel-Ensminger, Dr. Nancy Vedder-Shults

4 p.m. ~ There Is More Peace Somewhere

A Featured Presentation co-sponsored by UUWF and the GA Planning Committee. What would right relations between UU women and women around the world look like? Azza Karam – Senior Policy Research Advisor, UN Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Arab States – is uniquely qualified to bring analysis, advice, and affirmation. This is peacework for every UU, individually and in congregations.

Saturday, June 24

6:30-8 p.m. ~ Ministry to Women Award Honoring Rev. Shirley Ranck, PhD, author of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*. Private Event: Admission \$50 (limited income pay what you can afford). Tickets will be available on site at the UUWF Booth.

7:15 p.m. ~ Changing Women's Lives: UU Women's Federation Grants

What do Busy Bees, PSAs, Cakes and prison pen pals have in common? They are innovative projects funded by the UUWF Grants Program because they advance equity and justice for women! Meet our awardees and learn how your organization can participate in future grant cycles.

Sunday, June 25

Noon ~ Seasons for Survival:

Rituals for Breast Cancer Survivors

A joint project of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual and Rev. Ginger Luke, River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD, weaving together rituals, blessings and prayers marking common experiences of this cancer journey. An experiential sampling of this UUWF Margaret Fuller Award winning liturgy.

www.uuwf.org



UUWomen

*Advancing justice for women
through education and advocacy*

Inside This Issue

How <i>Cakes</i> Came to Be	Page 1
Denny and Jerry Davidoff Honored	Page 2
UUWF Intern's Work Focuses on Reproductive Rights, Violence Against Women	Page 3
In Praise of <i>Cakes</i>	Page 4
Building Bridges Across Our Differences: "Womanspirit, Sisterspirit" at GA	Page 5
UUWF Events at GA 2006	Page 5

"Womanspirit, Sisterspirit"

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

My own interests have encompassed these themes both academically while in Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and since then as the music consultant for the *Rise Up and Call Her Name* curriculum and in recording *Chants for the Queen of Heaven*.

Here are just a few of the questions we want to explore during our workshop:

- 1) How does our spiritual practice empower our social justice work?
- 2) What can we learn from each other, and how does this expand our ways of approaching social justice?

- 3) What commonalities can we see in our approaches and in our goals?

Working together is not always easy. But it can be exhilarating. Our spirituality and our social justice work go hand-in-hand. What we believe affects not only what we want to change, but also how we go about accomplishing this in the world today.

I hope to see many of you at the GA workshop. Your ideas can help us become more effective as an organization advocating for the empowerment of women and girls.