

the communicator

THE NEWSLETTER OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN'S FEDERATION

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Justice Work Resource Now Available

A highlight of UUWF's activities at this year's General Assembly was "Circles of Reflection: Engaging Women in Justice Work through Small Group Ministry." The handout distributed at the workshop is now available at www.uuwf.org. The 16 page guide contains information about small group ministry, as well as suggestions for sessions focusing on justice issues of interest to women and girls.

Recent Board Actions on Reproductive Justice

This year has seen an escalation on attacks on women's rights in general, with especially unrelenting assaults on women's access to contraception and abortion services. In response to this, the UUWF has taken several actions in recent months.

- In March, the board co-signed a statement protesting the **Child Abortion Interstate Notification Act**. The proposed legislation would prohibit taking minors across state lines to access abortion services and require health care providers to enforce parental involvement laws.
- In April, the board passed a motion reaffirming its support of the UUA's **1987 and 1993 UUA resolutions on reproductive rights**. The motion also supported the UUA Congregational Study/Action issue on Reproductive Justice which was subsequently adopted at GA.
- In August, the board co-signed an amicus brief supporting a **patient's right of access to all physician prescriptions**. It involves a suit that sought to reverse Washington state regulations requiring pharmacies to fill prescriptions for emergency contraception, but allowed individual pharmacists who refused to do so to refer the customer to another pharmacist. UUWF also signed an earlier amicus brief opposing this suit, but despite a previous ruling against it the suit has once again made its way back to the 9th Circuit Court.

UUWF at GA 2012: Advocating for Justice for Women and Girls

As an associate member organization of the UUA, the UUWF is given time on the General Assembly business agenda to report to the Assembly during a plenary session. The following is an edited version of the GA report delivered by Rev. Marti Keller, UUWF president. It differs from previous reports in that this year, those reporting were asked to focus on the ways in which their UUA department or UU organization engages in justice work.

In preparing for this year's General Assembly and its focus on immigration, racial, and economic justice, we immediately saw what a good fit it was for the UU Women's Federation. As our mission statement begins with the words "advancing justice for women and girls," we are already positioned to address those issues as they relate to women and girls. We have been vigorously engaged in this work for nearly 50 years.

In reaction to the draconian and damaging immigration legislation adopted in Arizona, the human rights of immigrants and the racial targeting of persons of color were most prominent in our hearts and minds when the Justice General Assembly was conceived. But as it approached we were unfortunately compelled to add the status of women, as well as the gender targeting of women, to our priorities. On Capitol Hill and in state legislatures, the attacks on women's rights have been unremitting recently, with mean-spirited and/or cynical roll-backs in the areas of reproductive justice, access to health care, equal pay, and measures to stop domestic violence.

We at the UU Women's Federation are outraged at this, and we have been working on several fronts to support Unitarian Universalists as they work to counter the omnipresent threats to the welfare of women and girls.

We are also heartened by the UUA's renewed focus on women's issues. Late last year we worked closely with the Association's Multi-cultural and Witness staffing group to help



Sofia Betancourt, recipient of a 2012 Margaret Fuller Grant for her research project on ecofeminist ethics among Caribbean women workers on the Panama Canal. See page three to learn how this year's grant recipients were selected to enhance UUWF participation in the UUA's special Justice General Assembly.

revision the UUWF Clara Barton Internship for Women's Issues, a position supported by an endowment comprising funds the UUWF donated and helped raise in the first years of the 21st century.

That process has placed the internship in just the right spot to support UUs at the grassroots, since it has moved the position's emphasis from direct advocacy at the federal level to providing resources and opportunities for congregations and their leaders to advocate for justice issues specific to women, notably reproductive and economic justice.

As we reported in the last issue of the newsletter, Jessica Halperin filled the redefined position in January, and the UUWF board and I have been working closely with her to support her efforts with UUWF's resources. At General

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UUWF's 50th Anniversary Year Approaches

In May 1963, members of the Association of Universalist Women and Alliance of Unitarian Women met in Chicago to consolidate their two organizations into the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation. The meeting was the culmination of a union that began in the late 1950s, when the two organizations began working together on plans for the observance.

Next year marks the 50th anniversary of that event, and planning has already begun for its celebration. Immediate past UUWF President Linda Lu Burciaga has volunteered to chair this effort, and in response to her call, all of UUWF's living former presidents have agreed to work together on the planning.

The past presidents are Kay Aler Maida, Fletcher, NC; Linda Lu Burciaga, Newburyport, MA; Denny Davidoff, Bridgeport, CT; Tina Jas, Eastham, MA; 05 Clarise Jefferson, Normal, IL; Arlene M. D. Johnson, Tulsa, OK; Linda McAffrey, Glencoe, MO; Phyllis Rickter, Arlington, MA; Nancy W. Van Dyke, Port Washington, NY.

UUWF also invites its members and friends to participate in this anniversary year by sharing your memories of the UUWF's first 50 years. Record your reminiscences in an email and send them to FiftyYears@uuwf.org (no attachments, please). You can also surface mail hard copies of your memories to the UUWF Office.

Bylaws Changes Reconfigure Board of Trustees

The bylaws adopted by the UUWF membership at its Special Meeting in 2004 provide for a five-member Board of Trustees, with each member of the board responsible for a specific portfolio. To allow the board maximum flexibility in implementing the mission of the restructured organization, those bylaws also empowered the board to amend them.

Since then the board has reconfigured the portfolios and titles of the five board positions several times, as the needs of the organization have evolved. At its April meeting - following a review of board positions that began at its September meeting - the board again amended the bylaws to reconfigure board positions as follows:

President/Chief Executive Officer

In addition to presiding over board meetings, this officer is responsible for general oversight, strategic planning, executive functions, and supervision of staff. The President/CEO also serves as liaison to the UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues.

Treasurer/Clerk

This officer is in charge of UUWF's financial

affairs and is also responsible for making sure accurate minutes of board meetings are recorded and maintained. Added to this position is the responsibility for financial development.

Vice President/

Communications and Outreach

This officer is responsible for member/donor outreach and general communications.

Vice President/

Funding Programs

This position remains the same and its portfolio includes responsibility for oversight of all of the UUWF's funding programs. In that capacity the officer also acts as liaison between the board and the grant and scholarship panels.

Vice President/

Leadership Development

This new position was created in response to the board's priority of ensuring diversity in UUWF leadership. This officer is responsible for recruitment and development of a diverse group of women for volunteer positions on the board, funding panels, and other committees and task forces.

Grant Projects Enhance UUWF's Participation In the 2012 General Assembly

Most years, projects funded by the UUWF's Equity and Justice and Margaret Fuller Grants Programs are selected from applications submitted in response to a general call for proposals.

The vision for these programs also provides for more intentional funding of projects. This year, in order to enhance the UUWF's participation in the UUA's special Justice General Assembly, the board chose to commission projects that related directly to the GA theme of immigrant, racial, and economic justice.

Equity and Justice Grant Recipient

This program supports UU justice projects directly affecting women and girls. A grant of \$5,000 was awarded to the UU Congregation of Green Valley, AZ for their project, "Amigas de Amado."

The twin goals of this project are 1) to provide needed support for marginalized Hispanic women and girls in the congregation's new home community of Amado, AZ, and 2) to establish a bridge between the congregation and the Hispanic community.

"Amigas de Amado" will be carried out primarily by women members of the congregation. Working in partnership with existing local agencies – a youth alliance, an adult education programs, and a local elementary school – the project seeks to increase the capacity of these organizations for serving women and girls and in the process identify-



Steering Committee for "Amigas de Amada," an Equity and Justice project of the UU Congregation of Green Valley, AZ: left to right: Sandra Mills, Ann Penton, Nancy Spear, Cathryn Kildahl, Diane Farone, Barbara Lemmon; front, Loretta Carmickle. Missing from this photo is Ann Rangos, also a member of the committee.

ing some of the underlying systemic issues involved in marginalizing this vulnerable population.

Margaret Fuller Grants Program

This program funds projects that explore feminist thought and action within a religious or spiritual context. The intention here was to commission a project that deepens our understanding and appreciation of woman-centered religious beliefs or spiritual practices of immigrant and/or indigenous cultures.

Sofia Betancourt, recipient of a \$4,000 Margaret Fuller grant, is currently pursuing a doctorate in African American studies at Yale University. UUWF's grant will support her

research into ecofeminist ethics among Caribbean women workers on the Panama Canal.

While many of us were taught as children to view the canal as a triumph of American progress over nature, Ms. Betancourt has seen that this project sits squarely at the intersection of Unitarian Universalism's first and seventh principles.

For over 30 years the inherent worth and dignity of thousands of men and women brought to Panama to work on the project were under almost constant assault from a variety of abuses. And it is hard to imagine a greater violation of respect for the interdependent web of all existence than the canal's initial and continuing impact upon the environment.

Canal workers came from all parts of the world, but a significant number came from the Caribbean. Sofia Betancourt will explore ecowomanist ethics drawn from the experiences of the Caribbean women who worked on the canal. Her project can be characterized not only as womanist, but also as mujerista and ecofeminist – and it also represents a "first," as to date there are no other complete monographs on ecowomanist thought.

UUWF at GA 2012, *CONT. FROM PAGE 1*

Assembly Jessica joined Rev. Helen Zidowecki and me in presenting a workshop on engaging women in justice work through small group ministry. Jessica is also developing follow-up resources on our GA Justice Ingathering, which featured the University of Arizona's Dr. Cecilia Rosales, who spoke about her work on reproductive justice and compassion issues among vulnerable populations of women and girls on the U.S.-Mexico border.

In preparing for this GA we also looked at two of our grants programs. As described at the top

of this page, we chose this year to commission projects that directly related to the GA theme.

These commissioned grant projects are not only worthy in themselves, they place UUWF, as always, in solid partnership with the vision and priorities of our entire progressive faith movement. We are confident that they will be models of the scope and depth of work on behalf of equity and justice we would hope to support and promote as we move proudly toward our 50th anniversary celebration in 2013.

Leadership Changes: New Board Member, Funding Panelists Are Appointed

Board of Trustees

Kathy Calhoun, a member of the First Unitarian Church of Dallas, TX, has joined the UUWF board as Vice President/Leadership Development. She will be responsible for recruiting and training women for volunteer positions on the board, funding panels, and committees.

Kathy has long been active in her congregation, where she has served as a member of the Board of Directors and as a member and secretary of the Social Action Clearing House. She is also active in the Women's Evening Alliance of her congregation, and has served as the group's secretary, treasurer, president and co-president.

Previously Kathy was a member of the UU Fellowship of Dallas, where she served as president and on many committees, as well helping to teach the adult religious education curricula *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven* and *Rise Up and Call Her Name*.

She has attended 15 General Assemblies, five as a volunteer and, in 2005, she chaired the volunteer committee. She has also held leadership positions in the Southwestern UU Conference, Southwestern Summer Institute, and in Southwest UU Women.

Equity and Justice Grants Panel

New members of this panel are **Pat Gray**, a member of Eliot Unitarian Chapel in Kirkwood, MO, and **Rev. Barbara Prose**, assistant minister at All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa, OK.

Pat has served on her congregation's board of trustees and has also been a volunteer in its Room at the Inn program, which serves homeless women and children. She is also currently vice-chair of St. Louis ConnectCare, a non-profit corporation which is the safety net provider of specialty health care services for St. Louis City and County.

An attorney by profession, Pat has long been active in local and state politics. In addition to actively supporting women candidates for public office, she also established a PAC to raise funds for progressive women candidates of either party.

As part of her work at All Souls, Barbara is developing a prison ministry that includes support for incarcerated women with children. She is also a member of the local YWCA board, which has as its mission empowering women and eliminating racism. She has also been active in the Oklahoma Chapter of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Rights.

While attending seminary, she worked as Director of Religious Education and Minister of Music for the MidCoast UU Fellowship, Edgecomb, ME. She has also worked as a homebirth midwife.

Other members of the Equity and Justice Grants Panel are the chair, Louise Kurabi, Bellevue, WA, and Juliana Keen, Minneapolis, MN.

Margaret Fuller Panel

Joining this panel are **Stephanie Gowin**, **Rev. Julianne Lepp**, and **Lynn Thomas**.

A member of the First UU Society of San Francisco, CA, Stephanie Gowin is currently a member of her congregation's board of trustees and has served on the Nominating, Retreat, Ministerial Relations and Family Faith committees.

As an owner of an instructional design consultancy for software engineers and business professionals, Stephanie has an interest in

addressing the disparity she sees between women and men in technology and science. At her oldest son's high school, this led her to create programs tailored to introducing girls to technology.

Rev. Julianne Lepp is the Lifespan Minister of the UU Congregation of Eau Claire, WI. In addition to her work there, Julianne is vice president of an interfaith congregation-based organizing group called Joining Our Neighbors Advancing Hope (J.O.N.A.H.). It organizes around issues such as treatment instead of prison, unfair lending practices, and sustainability measures.

Lynn Thomas, Meredith, NH, is a member of the Church of the Larger Fellowship UU. She is a past member of the UUWF board and recently retired as the Clara Barton District Executive. She has also served as president of the New Hampshire-Vermont District and as chair of her district Women and Religion group. Her work on a national level included service on Task Force One, which addressed concerns around clergy misconduct and sexual abuse. Her community service included helping to organize a state-wide domestic violence program.

Other members of the Margaret Fuller Grants Panel are the chair, Mary Teslow, of Franklin, NC, and Janet Nortrom, Milwaukee, WI.

Honoring UU Women

Do you know a woman who has given many years of devoted service to your congregation, but has never received any tangible recognition for her work? If so, consider enrolling her in the UUWF's Clara Barton Sisterhood.

Created by a vote of the UUWF membership in 1979, the Sisterhood is intended as a means of honoring UU women aged 80 and over and acknowledging their contributions to the life of our religious association and women's organizations.

Why women aged 80 and over? The Sisterhood was named in honor of Universalist Clara

Barton, one of our most famous foremothers and a distinguished leader of her day. Noted for organizing nursing services for soldiers during the Civil War, she was also founder of the American Red Cross. She did not begin the work for which she is known until she was in her 40s – during an age when many women died before reaching that age.

Women enrolled in the Sisterhood are awarded a certificate suitable for framing and a letter recognizing their accomplishments. For more information and to download an enrollment form, go to www.uuwf.org and look for Honors & Awards in the navigation menu.