

the communicator

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Reproductive Justice: A Legacy and Ongoing Commitment

This past January, UUWF President Rev. Marti Keller issued a joint statement with UUA President Peter Morales in observance of the 40th anniversary of the Roe v Wade Supreme Court decision. The UUWF and UUA's partnership in this historic act resulted in the founding, along with other religious groups, of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in 1973, an organization that continues its advocacy work today.

These were but two chapters in the UUWF's long and accomplished history in the commitment to advance reproductive rights and choice for women. Since the fall of 2012, and following the commitment of the UUA at the 2012 General Assembly to make reproductive justice a Congregational Study/Action Issue for 2012-2016, we have initiated several programs to better inform women and their allies of the issues at stake and prepare emotionally and spiritually to advocate for justice. Our efforts have included the following:

Reproductive Justice Webinar

Working closely with our most recent UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues, Jessica Halperin, we hosted a webinar in the fall of 2012 on the issue of reproductive justice.

In September, we offered the webinar "What is Reproductive Justice?" as an exclusive event for UUWF members, as well as members of UU Women and Religion (UUWR). UUWF President Rev. Marti Keller offered introductory remarks and a brief overview of UUWF's multi-decade justice work in the area of reproductive rights and choice. The webinar's featured presenter was Monica Simpson, Interim Executive Director of SisterSong, a national organization seeking justice for women whose race and economic status negatively impact their ability to access reproductive health services and information.

Approximately 30 women participated in this event. Plans are underway to distribute a

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Celebrating UUWF at 50!

Fifty years ago this May, representatives from the Universalist and Unitarian women's organizations gathered in Chicago to consolidate their two organizations.

These two predecessor organizations were the Association of Universalist Women, originally founded in 1869 and thought to be the oldest religious laywomen's organization in the United States, and the Alliance of Unitarian Women, first organized in 1880.

These two long-established women's organizations consolidated to form the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation and, in looking back at its first 50 years, there is much to celebrate. Here's just a sampling of UUWF's achievements:

Reproductive Rights and Justice.

The UU Women's Federation was a founding member of the organization now known as the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and remains a rigorous advocate of this issue (see related article on this page).

Voices of the New Feminism. A joint project of the UUWF and Beacon

Press, this pioneering book featured essays by early feminist activists, including Caroline Bird, Shirley Chisholm, Mary Daly, and Betty Friedan.

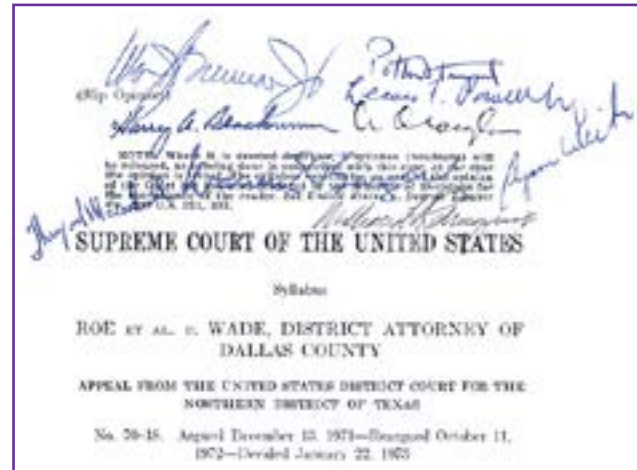
Ministry to Women Award. Founded to focus attention on women's issues during the annual UUA General Assembly, UUWF gives this award to individuals or organizations that minister to women in an outstanding manner. Recipients have included Ms. Magazine, poet May Sarton, the musical group Sweet Honey and the Rock, and Rev. Debra Haffner, founder of the Religious Institute for Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing.

Funding Programs. The UUWF currently has three:

Margaret Fuller Grants Program. Founded in the late 1980s and originally known as

the Feminist Theology Awards, this program supports accessible projects in UU religious feminisms. These include a compendium of poet May Sarton's work, rituals for women with breast cancer, and an on-line religious education course on woman-centered traditions in Western religions.

Equity and Justice Grants Program. These grants support UU justice projects that directly affect women and/or girls and address



UUWF has always been a rigorous advocate of reproductive justice and choice. Seen above is a copy of the Supreme Court decision in Roe v Wade, autographed by the justices.

the root causes of gender oppression. Funded projects have included a liberal religious ministry program for incarcerated women, radio public service announcements on human trafficking in languages used in Central and South America, and free health workshops for women migrant workers and indigenous women.

Marjory Bowens-Wheatley Scholarship Program. This scholarship program for general support originally benefited aspirants or candidates to the UU ministry who identify as women of color, Latina, or Hispanic. This year the criteria for those eligible to apply were expanded to include candidates in the UUA's religious education or music leadership credentialing programs who similarly self-identify.

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*Advancing justice
for women and girls,
and promoting
their spiritual growth.*

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Well Done and Welcome

It is with sadness and joy that we announce changes to the UUWF Board of Trustees. Treasurer/Clerk Mary Mercier is stepping down after five years of dedicated service. A member of First Parish Church of Nowell, MA, Mary has provided invaluable leadership on financial matters, and has made thoughtful and reliable contributions to board deliberations and decisions. Mary has worked closely with UUWF Executive Administrator Ellen Spencer on developing the annual budgets and has provided a necessary “checks and balances” component to our financial operations.



Sue Boone, a member of UUs of Clearwater, FL, is UUWF's new Treasurer/Clerk.

As a result of a Board vote and in accordance with UUWF bylaws, Sue Boone assumed responsibility for the Treasurer/Clerk position beginning in February. Sue brings over 30 years of experience serving in leadership roles at UU congregations and religious organizations, including Secretary and Treasurer of the UUA Southwest Conference, Treasurer of the Council of UU Camps and Conferences, Volunteer Coordinator for General Assembly – Fort Worth and Fort Lauderdale, Director of Southwest UU Summer Institute and as president of three UU churches. Sue has a BS degree in Business (accounting) and a MS in social work. Sue resides in Largo, Florida and is a member of the Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater congregation.

On behalf of the UUWF Board, we are deeply grateful to Mary for a job well done. And, we welcome Sue and the enthusiasm and skills she brings to the Board.

Reproductive Justice, CONT. FROM PAGE 1

recording of this webinar to UUWF women's groups and upcoming UU women's conferences. We are also in conversation with UUWR on ways we might collaborate on future projects.

Small Group Ministry Programs.

Again, through the work of our UUWF Clara Barton Intern and working in collaboration with the UU Small Group Ministry Network, we supported the effort of introducing several small group ministry session plans that will enable congregational small group participants to have deeper conversations about reproductive justice and its personal impact. Topics such as “What is Reproductive Justice?”, “Reproductive Justice: Choice and Loss”, and “Reproductive Justice: Raising Children” were explored. More information can be found at <http://www.uua.org/reproductive/action/200096.shtml>.

Southwest UU Women's Conference

In support of regional gatherings of women, the UUWF had an information table and presence at the recent SWUUC conference held in Corpus Christi, TX, in February. Kathy Calhoun, UUWF's Vice President/Leadership Development organized our participation. Materials about UUWF, including our work on reproductive justice, were made available.

Amicus Briefs and Other Statements

As part of our commitment to remain vocal and visible on matters affecting a woman's right to choose if she will have children, the UUWF has issued statements of support independently and in partnership with the UUA, including:

- An *amicus brief* supporting a case in the 8th District Court opposing the exclusion of contraception from health care (*ACLU et al v O'Brien*); UUWF has also signed onto amicus briefs for similar cases in different jurisdictions.
- A letter supporting the Shaheen Amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, which would add coverage of abortion to medical insurance coverage provided to military families;
- A statement by the UUWF Board of Trustees reaffirming UUA Resolutions on reproductive rights;
- A statement protesting the child interstate abortion notification act.

The UUWF celebrates its role in reproductive justice, and especially the support of our members which makes our advocacy work possible. With your continued support, we will continue to act and educate for justice and do our part to make a difference in the lives of women, families and communities.

Thanking Our Donors

We extend a heartfelt “thank you” to all the individuals who contributed generous donations and pledges between January 1 and December 31, 2012.

Olympia Brown Circle (\$2,500-\$4,999)

Edward A. Simmons, Hempstead, NY

Dorothea Dix Circle (\$1,000-\$2,499)

Atlanta, GA - UU Congregation of Atlanta
Brooklyn, NY - Women's Alliance, First Unitarian Congregational Society
Kansas City, MO - Demeters, All Souls UU Church
Manhasset, NY - Women's Group, UU Congregation at Shelter Rock
Phyllis Rickter, Arlington, MA
Lee Sullivan, Lafayette, IN

Maria Louise Baldwin Circle (\$500-999)

Akron, OH - UU Women's Association, UU Church
Arlington, MA - Alliance of the First Parish, First Parish UU
Rev. Terry Davis, Atlanta, GA
Mary-Ella Holst, New York, NY
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Dr. Kirstie Lewis, Bellevue, WA
Verna Livingston, Port Washington, NY
Louisville, KY - Women's Alliance, First Unitarian Church
New York, NY - Women's Alliance, Unitarian Church of All Souls
Paramus, NJ - Women's Alliance, Central Unitarian Church
Salem, OR - UUWF, UU Congregation of Salem
San Diego, CA - UUWF, First UU Church of San Diego
Spokane, WA - UU Women of Spokane, UU Church of Spokane
Stockton, CA - The UU Alliance, First UU Church

Maria Mitchell Circle (\$250-499)

Bloomfield Hills, MI - Unitarian Alliance, Birmingham Unitarian Church
Chandler, AZ - Valley UUWF, Valley UU Congregation
College Station, TX - Woman's Alliance, UU Church of the Brazos Valley
Concord, MA - Women's Parish Association, First Parish in Concord
East Lansing, MI - Women's Fellowship, UU Church of Greater Lansing
Eugene, OR - Women's Alliance, The UU Church in Eugene
Evelynn Gioiella, New York, NY
Grosse Pointe, MI - Women's Alliance, Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church
Hartford, CT - Unitarian Women's Alliance, Unitarian Society of Hartford
Lafayette, CO - Boulder Valley UU Fellowship

Littleton, MA - Littleton Branch Alliance, First Church Unitarian
Eva Marx, Hingham, MA
Minneapolis, MN - Assoc. of Universalist Women, First Universalist Church
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Dr. Marth May Eliot Circle (\$100-249)

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Plano, TX - Women's Alliance, Community UU Church
Carol Rader, Framingham, MA
Riverside, CA - Women's Federation, UU Church, Riverside, CA
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Santa Fe, NM, Chapter of UUWF, The UU Congregation of Santa Fe
Schenectady, NY - Women's Alliance, First Unitarian Society of Schenectady
Mickey Selwyn, Honolulu, HI
Sherborn, MA - Alliance, UU Area Church at First Parish
Marjory Smith, Wilsonville, OR
Dee Stegman, Cincinnati, OH
Susan Stenovac, San Luis Obispo, CA
Mary Teslow, Franklin, NC
Rhoda Whitney, Denver, CO

Other Contributions (\$99 and Under)

Alton, IL - Anna E. Sparks Alliance, First Unitarian Church
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UUWF's Honors Program Unites Women in Sisterhood

The highlight of the February Annual Business Meeting of the Women's Alliance at All Souls Church in New York City is the ceremony honoring our newest Clara Barton Sisterhood members. As we gather for our monthly luncheon, anticipation rises as Rev. Galen Guengerich, senior minister of All Souls, joins us and we linger over dessert, coffee and tea and await the ceremony. The UUWF certificates, now in presentation folders are ready. Bouquets of flowers, wrapped until presentation, sit on the mantelpiece. We are gathered to recognize women who are now 80 years and older who remain active in the congregation and community.

What does this ceremony mean? When asked this question, Rev. Guengerich replied, "The Clara Barton Sisterhood champions women who have achieved the gift of age and continue to seize each day as an opportunity to bestow the gift of service." But what does it mean to the honorees themselves?

For **Jane Alwais (enrolled in the Sisterhood in 2013)**: "Receiving the Clara Barton Sisterhood recognition brings both surprise and honor. Surprise because my work as an archivist is but an extension of the professional career I loved, a teacher of history. The honor is in being entrusted to help preserve and record the church's history. I am deeply thankful to the Women's Alliance." **Marilyn B. Reagan, (2013)**: "I walked out of that room on a high note. I felt like the "Queen of May" with all the flowers and accolades. I especially appreciated that I was honored not only for my church activities but also for my outside efforts in the wider community."

Pat Taylor (2012): "The Clara Barton Sisterhood has become a rite of Passage for Women's Alliance members. With our Senior Minister giving the background of each awardee, the ceremony has become the focal point of our annual business meeting. As a recipient, I found the ceremony engendered a warm feeling of sisterhood as I looked around the luncheon tables at women I work closely with – and admire very much." **Rosina Cotruzolla (2012)**: "It was an overwhelming surprise. I am most humble and grateful for the many opportunities the Alliance and the

congregation offer to meet and interact with individuals of varied interests and talents and to become a member of the Clara Barton Sisterhood."

Cornelia Do (2011) brings a special perspective to her feelings as she was deeply affected by "Super Storm Sandy," losing her home in Long Beach, Long Island and now re-located to New York City: "I was so honored... but feel a little guilty for I had not done too much for Unitarian Universalism in past few years. But now since I have come to live in the neighborhood, though just a little too far for me to walk more than one-way each day, I can participate more in congregational life and have been to several activities per week. Soon, when I am completely moved out of Long Beach, I will choose some active volunteer work, I hope."

Lorraine Allen (2010): "It was a most gratifying experience to have been enrolled in the Clara Barton Sisterhood by the very people with whom I had worked for so many years in the Women's Alliance and my church community. It was a special privilege for me to have the honor presented to me by the UUWF President, Linda Lu Burciaga in April, the very month of my 80th birthday."



Newly enrolled Clara Barton Sisters Jane Michel Alwais (left) and Marilyn B. Reagan were the first Sisters enrolled in 2013. They are seen here with Rev. Galen Guengerich, their congregation's minister.

Phoebe Hoss (2009): "Co-founding the Circle of Elders with **Diana List Cullen (2009)** at All Souls was for me a deeply rewarding exercise in sisterhood -- in terms of both Diana's and my collaboration and of the open-hearted interchange we enabled among the group members themselves. Although I didn't think of it as such at the time, being inducted into the Clara Barton Sisterhood wasn't only an honor in itself but set the seal of sisterhood on our experience of speaking out and really listening to one another. I feel sure that was true for Diana as well: we were all bonded in a truly sisterly fashion."

Editor's note: To learn how to honor a women in your congregation with a Clara Barton Sisterhood, go to www.uuwf.org or call or write the UUWF Office.

UUWF at 50, CONT. FROM PAGE 1

UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues. Last but certainly not least, this internship program in the UUA's Washington Center is supported by an endowment comprising UUWF's \$200,000 donation and assistance to the UUA in raising a matching amount. Founded in 2002, the internship has recently shifted its focus 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.

This is just a sampling of what the UUWF has done in its first 50 years. We begin the next with a mission focused on advancing justice for women and girls and promoting their spiritual growth.

A Year of Transformation: Reflections of the UUWF Clara Barton Intern

by Jessica Halperin
Outgoing UUWF Clara Barton Intern
for Women's Issues

When I was unexpectedly hired as the UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues fourteen months ago, I was excited...but really had no idea I was teetering on the edge of something really, really big.



*Outgoing intern
Jessica Halperin*

doing faith-organizing and advocacy, but my limited background was in interfaith communications.

Wondering what, exactly, my role was there in the office, I made lists during my first week, including this one: "If I'm Bored, I Could Always..."

This is the short story of a year of transformation, of Unitarian Universalism and my own life, towards reproductive justice. Both of us had spent many years preparing, especially by studying feminism and anti-racism, but to me it feels like the year went from zero to sixty.

During my third week on the job, I suddenly no longer had to make lists about being bored. On January 30, the Susan G. Komen Foundation decided to halt its grants to Planned Parenthood, citing a congressional investigation. As you might remember, major public outcry ensued, and I had reason to restart the fire under the UUA's Reproductive Justice Action Alert list, draft press releases, get onto social media, and give the UUA something to say.

It was also around that time that the Obama Administration decided to include

contraceptive coverage as a preventative health care service under the new Affordable Care Act, and federal investigations of Planned Parenthood suddenly launched into full swing... Ready or not, I saw major opportunities for liberal religious people to get their voice heard on these topics, and I was, and we were, on the move.

Over the next several months, on topics from the Violence Against Women Act to food stamps and unemployment, we hosted webinars and we wrote letters to the editor. We called Congress and penned newsletter columns and led public prayers and made videos. We sent a lot of email.

The Komen Foundation backed down after just four days, but in many ways we Unitarian Universalists were just waking up. Though UUA and UUWF staff were using the "reproductive justice" framework, the denomination as a whole hadn't passed a statement on reproductive health, choice, or justice in more than 20 years.

Many of us took a "been there, won that" attitude to the reproductive rights movement, and it took a concentrated flurry of attacks on choice – 92 legislative attacks in 2011 alone, as well as the Komen fiasco and the contraceptive coverage debate – to open our eyes and realize that the pro-choice community was losing ground.

And as far as the reproductive justice movement was concerned, we hadn't even really begun. So we did begin then – learning about reproductive justice on webinars and conference calls, and starting to build relationships with reproductive justice organizations in our communities.

Around the same time, two lay leaders at the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, NJ, had proposed the topic of Reproductive Justice as a contender for the 2012-2016 Congregational Study/Action Issue, and reproductive justice advocates from around the country were interested in organizing behind it. As the Justice General Assembly in Phoenix was teaching Unitarian Universalism about being an ally and how it feels to work for justice, delegates from

across the country chose to learn about and advocate for reproductive justice, as our major social justice issue for the next four years. The Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation was a key force in that election, along with SisterSong and dozens of other congregations and organizations across the country.

And wow – if I thought I was busy with reproductive justice before GA, I sure wasn't about to slow down afterwards! I had the Reproductive Justice Curriculum for Congregations to write, a Congregational Resource Packet to produce, and new colleagues and contacts from across the country reaching out.

I created the UUA's Reproductive Justice Advisory Group and established ongoing legislative priorities and strategies for organizing. We joined several coalitions here in Washington D.C. and around the country. We, Unitarian Universalists, are beginning to wrap our heads and hearts around true religious leadership on this issue, and we are becoming known among our interfaith and secular colleagues as dependable partners in the reproductive justice movement.

My friends, we have so much to offer our neighborhoods and our world. I can barely express my pride and gratitude to have been able to accompany Unitarian Universalism on this year of transformation and unfolding opportunity on this central issue of our time.

It has been a year of transformation and opportunity for me, as well – I've been hired into a permanent position on the UUA's Multicultural Ministries and Witness team, and remain indebted to the UUWF and the Clara Barton Internship for providing the foundation. I look forward to working with you, the UUWF, and future Clara Barton interns in the future. Just imagine what we might accomplish.

Editor's note: For links to the resources mentioned in this article, go to www.uuuf.org and select "Links" on the navigation menu.



www.uuwf.org



UU Women

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*For late-breaking news,
visit us online at www.uuwf.org.*



Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow was the theme of a tea celebrating UUWF's 50th anniversary held in April at the UUA's Boston headquarters. Hosted by the UUWF board, guests included UUA President Peter Morales and Executive Vice President Kay Montgomery, as well as past UUWF board members, presidents, and donors and friends. Attendees shown above perfectly illustrate the tea's theme. From left to right, seated: Rev. Marti Keller, current UUWF president, past presidents Denny Davidoff and Phyllis Rickter and, standing: incoming president Kirstie Lewis, Ph.D. with immediate past president Linda Lu Burciaga.