

News – October 2016

This month we're excited to introduce our two new Board members!



President's Letter

One of the most impactful happenings in my life occurred 25 years ago. I found All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. As a middle schooler dealing with bullying and difference in the heart of the bible belt, I was in deep need of a welcoming, liberal religious home. It is with profound gratitude that I found this and so much more at All Souls and through the broader Unitarian Universalist movement.

Since that time, I have had the honor and privilege to serve Unitarian Universalism via numerous roles on the local, regional and national levels. In my home congregation, I have served on the Intercultural Bridging Team, Youth Board, Associational Affairs Committee, LGBT Inclusion Committee and Intern Committee. In addition to the Board of Trustees, I currently serve on the Intercultural Advisory Board and Personnel Committee. I also have served on the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee, Southwest District Board of Directors, Continental UU Young Adult Network

(C*UUYAN) Steering Committee and Youth Council.

One of the most powerful volunteer experiences with UUism was serving on the UUWF board in my 20s. This experience gave me an opportunity to delve into the role of Unitarian Universalism in gender justice, as well as the role of gender justice in UUism. It was at that time that the UUWF board instituted the Clara Barton Internship, created a performance piece called "Making Waves" that explored the intersections of the different waves of the feminist movement, and brought the authors of Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future to General Assembly.

I'm so incredibly excited for this new opportunity to serve you, our members, and our UU movement via the role of President of the UUWF. Ten years later and the UUWF is still doing amazing work! Current initiatives include providing support to women leading the #BlackLivesMatter movement, advocacy for reproductive justice and funding for the Zika virus, and preparing for the Badass Convergence – an intergenerational, intersectional gathering of women – in 2017. Thank you for granting me this honor of serving you. I'm very much looking forward to working together to advance justice for women and girls and promote their spiritual growth.

Justice Waidner Smith is a diversity and inclusion practitioner currently spearheading the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for a Fortune 500 company headquartered in Tulsa, OK. She holds a BA in Social Identity Theory and Writing from Hampshire College in Amherst, MA, and a MA in Intercultural Leadership and Management from the School for International Training in Vermont. Justice and her husband, Aiden, are passionate

about Unitarian Universalism and are grateful to be a part of such an incredible faith tradition.



I'm **Claire Sexton** and I am so happy to join the UUWF Board as Vice President for Funding Programs. Just before I joined, the board voted to give a grant to [Standing on the Side of Love](#) to fund dependent care for leaders in the Movement for Black Lives, called the "Stay In It Fund." An organizational board that says, "Yes, of course we should give to this cause" is one I'm especially excited to be a part of. Research by our partners at Standing on the Side of Love heard resoundingly that a movement led by women is prone to burnout and one way to prevent that is to offer support to women who are caring for their children and family members as well as the communities around them.

My whole background has led me here, I grew up UU in a feminist household in Houston, with strong support from aunts and experiences at [Southwest UU Women's](#) conferences through high school and college. After finishing a BA in Art History I got involved in the district Young Adult Network (SWUUYAN) and soon thereafter the Continental UU Young Adult Network (C*UUYAN) while doing image management at a doctor's office as my day

job. It was at C*UUYAN conference Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression programming that I realized a lot about my white, hetero, cisgender privilege and specifically how those identities often protect me from many experiences that other folks do not have the option of avoiding.

In 2005, newly married, I left my home state of Texas for Brooklyn, New York to go to graduate school, where I earned a Master's in Arts Administration. Then we stayed in New York for 8 more years. During that time I served as the part time Young Adult and Campus Ministry Consultant for the Metro New York District, while also working as the full-time Communications Manager for a nonprofit art gallery. Later I got involved in Religious Education at First UU Brooklyn, facilitating *Our Whole Lives* with junior high students and young adults (though not at the same time). Our son was born in summer 2013, and in spring of 2015 my husband and I decided to move back to Texas to be closer to our families. We arrived in my husband's hometown of Waco just over a year ago and are enjoying the benefits of living with grandparents and being in a city where you can get from one end of town to the other in 20 minutes or less, and the other grands are a 90-minute drive away.

As my UU involvement over the past six years has been at the local congregational level, I am really looking forward to engaging with UUs and Women from around the U.S. and the world as part of the UUWF board. More information will come soon about more amazing programs and partnerships that we are a part of, and I hope to meet many of you at [General Assembly](#) next year in New Orleans!

General Assembly 2016

Women's leadership shone brightly at General Assembly 2016 in Columbus, Ohio. Our highly-attended UUWF-sponsored programs celebrated women whose lives and ministries are focused on *advancing justice for women and girls and promoting their spiritual growth*.



“Building Bridges from Reproductive Choice to Reproductive Justice” brought together Cecile Richards of Planned Parenthood and Monica Simpson of SisterSong for a dialogue about the history, opportunities and challenges facing the reproductive choice and reproductive justice movements. Their conversation was moderated by Rev. Debra Haffner, former President of the Religious Institute. Richards was introduced by Rev. Dr. Daniel Kanter of First Unitarian Church of Dallas, where Richards grew up and attended preschool, before moving to Austin when her mother became Governor of Texas. Simpson was

introduced by Rev. Marti Keller, UUWF Affiliated Minister, who has partnered with Simpson and SisterSong in their shared home city of Atlanta. At the conclusion of the program, Richards and Simpson were awarded the [UUWF Ministry to Women Award](#) in recognition of their important work on behalf of women and girls.



Our second program was a wide-ranging panel conversation about the “Future of Women” and the intersectional nature of women’s movements for justice. Former Clara Barton Intern Jessica Halperin moderated a conversation with Rev. Marisol Caballero and Ranwa Hammamy (both former recipients of the [Marjorie Bowens Wheatley Scholarship](#)), followed by small group discussion and conversation between the panel and the attendees. Participants raised key issues for UU women to consider – the intersectional nature of our reproductive justice work, concern about reproductive health care access, bridging the gap between generations of women, broadening our understanding of gender and womanhood, confronting patriarchy, and how we can all be allies to each other. This program also served as our Annual Meeting, with a report from outgoing UUWF President Kirstie Lewis about the current and future work of UUWF.



UUWF booth at GA 2016

We also enjoyed visiting with people at our booth in the Exhibit Hall, where we collected your questions for our UUA Presidential Candidates who, for the first time, are all women.

We look forward to continuing the robust dialogue begun at General Assembly. To watch the videos of our GA programs, go to our new [Videos](#) page.

(GA photos courtesy of Rev. Beth Dana)

Advocacy Update

As we move into the fall and the end of the 2016 election season, there will be new opportunities for UUWF public policy witness and education around justice for women:

- The spread of the **Zika virus** this summer into the continental United States (it had already hit Puerto Rica) has brought even more urgency to the need to pressure Congress when it returns to session on September 6 to provide the funding necessary to abate this mosquito born disease and provide the necessary range of reproductive health protections and interventions for impacted women. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that there have already been more than 500

cases of Zika in pregnant people in the US and at least 15 children have been born with Zika-related neurological damage. Now concentrated in Florida, health officials are predicting a spread to other Gulf Coast states over the next two years. In the face of this, the majority party congressional leaders have stalled efforts to allocate adequate funds and to use these funds effectively by including restrictions in using these monies for contraception and excluding Planned Parenthood from receiving any. UUWF will be partnering with other religious and secular advocacy groups asking Senate Leader Mitch McConnell and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan to do what is required to combat Zika and protect the health of women and children.

- The 40th anniversary of the passage of the **Hyde Amendment** (which prohibits funding abortions) to the annual federal budget. There have been briefings by two congresswomen on the proposed **“Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance (EACH) Woman Act.”** This proposed national legislation would once again ensure that no matter her income, zip code or insurance provider, every woman should have access to pregnancy related care, including abortion. As part of the **All Above All** campaign to restore and sustain abortion coverage for low-income women, UUWF participated in a week of action in late September, including Facebook and Twitter events.
- We will be supporting the National Partnership for Women & Families

in their “**Expecting Better**” initiative to adopt a federal paid family leave and medical leave bill, which would augment the Family and Medical Leave Act. This landmark legislation has been used more than 200 million times since its passage in 1993 to provide workers with unpaid time off to care for a new child, to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to address one’s own serious health condition.

Look for a UUWF fact sheet and possible webinar on the Democratic and Republican platforms on women’s justice issues—and what is at stake in the 2016 election—coming in the next few weeks.

Archive Project



UUWF and the [UU Women and Religion](#) have been in conversation with the archivists at Meadville-Lombard in Chicago Illinois about the new UU women’s herstory collection, HEResies. So far we have dropped off our historical quilts and some of the very old material they’re going to help us scan and preserve. The goal is to have

UU women’s herstory online, cross-referenced and accessible to all. There will be some fundraising set up soon to allow Meadville-Lombard to pay staff and interns to complete the work.

From the Archives

Autumn Ritual

The beginning of November is a time when the veil between the worlds is very thin. This is a powerful release ceremony to do on your own or in a community of friends. Be prepared to comfort and nurture those who are grieving... Readings and music are only suggestions, ceremonies are best when you make them your own.

Prepare for this ritual by creating a place outside for planting spring bulbs. Luminaria can light the path from ritual space to the consecrated ground. If it is impossible to bury bulbs, people can take them home to plant them, or write what they need to release on a piece of paper and bury it in soil contained in a large container on the altar. The meditation may be pre-taped if you are doing this alone...

[Autumn Ritual from UUWF Communicator 1998 Fall](#)

FROM OUR SISTER UU ORGANIZATIONS:

THIRD INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S CONVOCATION

Asilomar Conference Grounds, Monterey Peninsula, CA, February 16-19, 2017

The Convocation’s theme is “Weaving Global Partnerships...Forging a Just Future Together.” The event will bring together U*U women from around the world to connect, share, celebrate, and empower in the beautiful, inspirational setting of

Asilomar, “a refuge by the sea.” Keynoters include Dr. Cecilia A. Conrad, managing director of the MacArthur Foundation, and Rev. Florence Caplow, UU minister, author, and Soto Zen priest in the Suzuki Roshi lineage. Visit <http://www.IntlWomensConvo.org> for all details.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN AND RELIGION

Looking for a UU women’s conference in your area? UUWR has them all on one calendar: <http://www.uuwr.org/calendar>

Cakes for the Queen of Heaven curriculum facilitators, there is a new Facebook group for you: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cakesforthequeenofheaven>

Rise Up and Call her Name curriculum has a new website featuring the writings of Liz Fisher: <http://www.riseupandcallhername.com>

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