



**UULMNJ BULLETIN
APRIL 2014**

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

It is Spring, finally - time of rebirth and new growth. After such a long hard winter, energizing sun and warm breezes offer a renewal of the spirit. Nature is organizing its natural processes for a new season. The human endeavor is no different. Organizing for a new season seems to be happening everywhere I go. I am constantly being asked to help with organizing efforts emerging around the state and the nation.



I was on a conference call recently. I serve on the UUA SANS (State Advocacy Networks) executive committee and we were trying to organize the emerging group of what has grown to seventeen UU state networks. One person asked, what does a SANS do? My response was quick. UULMNJ orchestrates a three-step process toward justice for Unitarian Universalists in New Jersey. We begin by articulating the moral and ethical public policy imperatives, based on our UU values and our goal of creating a just society. Secondly, we educate, for we can be truly effective when our members can understand and converse about the issues, and especially when we can raise up the moral implications. And then, based on concerns for justice and on factual information, we take the bold steps of advocacy.

As you read through this bulletin, you will see our UULMNJ Spring organizing efforts. A new Legal Advocacy Project is beginning. New action alerts for Bail Reform, Sandy Bill of Rights, Gun Violence Prevention through municipalities and many others are in progress. To this end, we have developed policy briefs and fact sheets for each of current UULMNJ issues. We have also updated the website so that those materials and other issue information are readily available. Since true advocacy depends on organizing not only people, but funds to support their work, we have created a new state-wide plan for fundraising so that we can ensure the sustainability of UULMNJ in years to come.

So if this season has blessed you with a sense of renewal, please consider sharing some of that new energy with UULMNJ. We are largely a volunteer organization that requires the strength and support of our volunteers and congregations to create a more just New Jersey. There is a place for you in UULMNJ. Just give me a call. And if you are already volunteering, thank you for all that you do! You make UULMNJ possible.

Happy Spring!

Faithfully,
Rev. Craig Hirshberg

IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE ORGANIZES LETTER CAMPAIGN TO PROTEST NEW JERSEY IMMIGRATION DETENTION CONDITIONS

Secretary Jeh Johnson, Secretary of the Office of Homeland Security is receiving a big package. Over 400 letters from Unitarian Universalists across the state have been sent to his office to draw attention to the unnecessary detention undocumented persons who pose no threat, and to the sub-standard conditions of the detention facilities. Thank you UULMNJ Immigration Task Force for leading the way. See the letter at: <http://www.uulmnjppn.org/index.php/issues/current-priority-issues/immigration-policy-reform/143-action-alert-march-3-immigration-task-force-letter-campaign-2>.

UULMNJ 5TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION & ANNUAL PLENARY – RECAP

About 80 UUs gathered at the UU Congregation of Princeton to for UULMNJ's Annual Plenary. “*We are getting good at these meetings*” sums up attendees’ feelings about the event. One participant noted that these meeting allow us to create thoughtful positions on many complex issues, a task which is too large for individual congregations. And it is always important to have an opportunity to connect and energize one another in addition to our usual teleconferences. We even had a cake to celebrate our fifth anniversary. Thank you for all who helped the day run smoothly.

Meeting business included electing new board members and adopting a 2014 – 2015 budget. New board members elected to serve on the UULMNJ Board of Trustees, effective July 1, 2014:

- Andrea Lerner (Metro NY District Executive)
- Rev. Bill Neely (Princeton)
- Roni Taylor (Plainfield)

Continuing to serve on the board are Nick Lewis (Montclair), Frances Prestianni (Princeton), Missy Staples (Somerset Hills), and Judy Strachan (Montclair). Gail Marsh Saxer (Ocean County) and Rev. Virginia Jarocha-Ernst (Monmouth County) will be ending their terms on the board. And our youth representative, Adam Green (Ridgewood) has let us know that he has to leave the board.

The past year’s highlights and accomplishments were reviewed, and attendees were treated to an informative and entertaining keynote address, *How We Got Here: New Jersey's Crawl Out of the Great Recession*, by Gordon MacInnes, President of New Jersey Policy Perspective (www.njpp.org).

At the conclusion of the plenary, there was a liaison and congregation volunteer training covering actions as a moral imperative, congregational resources and Salsa, our advocacy system. Rev. Craig’s annual report is at the end of this bulletin. It is also posted on the UULMNJ website, along with the task forces’ annual reports and other materials included in the meeting packet, at <http://www.uulmnj.org/12-news-events/uulmnj-news-and-events/219-annual-meeting-recap-2014.html>.

Current Initiatives

Below are some of the current initiatives of UULMNJ. If you have not received information about these, please see your congregation UULMNJ liaison or email admin@uulmnj.org to be placed on our action alert distribution list.

1. Reinstate NJ membership in Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. View Action Alert at <http://www.uulmnjppn.org/index.php/component/content/article/12-news-events/uulmnjppn-news-and-events/136-regional-greenhouse-gas-initiative-rggi-action-alert-feb-18-2014>
2. Support Bail Reform (New Jim Crow Task Force)
3. Prevent Fracking in the Delaware River Basin. View action alert at <http://www.uulmnjppn.org/index.php/component/content/article/12-news-events/uulmnjppn-news-and-events/141-action-alert-march-3-prevent-fracking-in-the-delaware-river-basin>

4. Work with municipalities for gun safety features by manufacturers. View Action Alert at <http://www.uulmnjppn.org/index.php/component/content/article/12-news-events/uulmnjppn-news-and-events/134-gun-violence-prevention-request-for-information>
5. UULMNJ and UU Service Committee ask for federal minimum wage raise to \$10.10. View Action Alert at http://org.salsalabs.com/o/1035/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=15057
6. UULMNJ Legal Advocacy Project is searching for attorneys to help this court focused advocacy program. Contact Rev. Craig for more information director@uulmnj.org

Thank you Tara Wildhagen!

It is with sad regret that we have to say good-bye to our administrator, Tara Wildhagen. Tara will be moving on to take a full-time job with the State of New Jersey helping with the Sandy Relief Funds analysis. This is a wonderful opportunity for her that will truly utilize her gifts and talents. We are all very happy for her and appreciate all the developmental work she has done for UULMNJ over the past year. Her organizing and Salsa contributions have helped move us forward.

Job Position Opening at UULMNJ

Accordingly, there is an immediate opening for a part time UULMNJ administrator. The position will be between 15 and 20 hours/week. If you know someone who has strong administrative and technical skills, please spread the word. For more information and a job description, please contact director@uulmnj.org.

SIGN UP FOR UULMNJ NEWS AND ACTION ALERTS

You can receive **UULMNJ News and Action Alerts** directly. If you haven't received anything already, it means you are not in our database. If you would like to receive these in the future, please send your contact information to admin@uulmnj.org and we will sign you up.

NEW INITIATIVE – UULMNJ LEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT

The UULMNJ board passed a resolution to begin development of a judicial advocacy program, our **Legal Advocacy Project** (LAP). We have learned, through Marriage Equality, for example, that legislation is not always the most effective way to impact public policy. The mission of the LAP will be to advocate through the New Jersey State and Federal Courts to advance the advance cases that are consistent with UU principles and that generally (but not always) encompass at least one issue of the UUMNJ taskforces.

One of the first steps will be to gather a group of UU attorneys interested in helping to implement the LAP. UULMNJ is seeking attorneys in private practice to commit to be retained on a pro bono basis to draft amicus (friend of the court) briefs in existing cases that are consistent with the UULMNJ mission. *These volunteer attorneys will not be representing parties in lawsuits*, but rather will be supporting the UULMNJ mission by filing a brief on its behalf.

If you are an attorney and are interested in participating in this project, or know an attorney who might be, please contact Rev. Craig at director@uulmnj.org and the volunteer attorney assisting with this project, Gary Nissenbaum, Esq., at gdn@gdnlaw.com.

Read more about this exciting new project on our website:

http://www.uulmnj.org/images/documents/annualmeeting2014/LAP_Description_April_2014.pdf.

RESOURCES

LegiScan (<http://legiscan.com>). This free, public service website tracks what is happening in state legislatures around the country and creates a single easy-to-use weekly report delivered each Friday to your email account or via an RSS feed. Create an account, then search by bill number or keyword for any

legislation that you wish to monitor. LegiScan also allows you to create reports to share with other members of your Issues Team. (Seen in a UU PA Legislative Advocacy Network newsletter.)

Marriage equality guide for New Jersey:

http://www.uulmnj.org/images/documents/Marriage-Equality/Marriage_Implementation_Guide_12-17-13.pdf

CONNECT WITH UULMNJ ON FACEBOOK

UULMNJ has a Facebook page! Like us at <https://www.facebook.com/uulmnj>. And then let us know what you are thinking. Share how your congregation is working for social justice – others want to know, and may even be inspired by your actions.

ISSUES UPDATE – GET INVOLVED

If you are interested serving on a task force, contact the task force chair or director@uulmnj.org. We are also looking for volunteers to serve on our *communications, congregational relations, development, and finance* committees, all critical to the well-being of UULMNJ. See our volunteer sign-up form for more options. Please contact Rev. Craig or your congregational liaison to let us know how you would like to get involved.

http://www.uulmnj.org/images/documents/annualmeeting2014/VolunteerSignup_April_2014.pdf

Rapid Response Teams – We Need You!

We are seeking to form *Rapid Response Teams* - geographically organized advocacy teams, trained and ready to reach out to state legislators on important issues. These teams will be in contact with all congregations in their area, participate in advocacy training, and keep abreast of the status of important UULMNJ issues.

New Task Forces

Two new task forces were announced at the annual meeting:

- Criminal Justice: End the New Jim Crow
- Healthcare: Reproductive Justice

Keep Up With the Latest Action Alerts

Now you can find the latest actions alerts in a convenient monthly summary on the UULMNJ Public Policy Network website. From the homepage at www.uulmnjppn.org, click on the link to *View Liaison Conference Call Minutes*. Each set of minutes will have links to the task force's current action alerts. And as always, check in at www.uulmnj.org for the latest news of the organization, education and research information, and congregational news and events. Please help us by forwarding information on your congregation's social justice news and events.

Task Force Annual Reports

Task Force Annual Reports are posted at <http://www.uulmnj.org/12-news-events/uulmnj-news-and-events/219-annual-meeting-recap-2014.html>. Contact the task force chairs for more information and/or to join a task force. All would welcome your participation.

- Environment Task Force - Rohn Hein rohn@netzero.net
- Criminal Justice Task Force – Al Stawsky, alynways@gmail.com
- Healthcare: Reproductive Justice – Rev. Kathleen Green, uurevkathleen@gmail.com
- Economic Justice – Lorraine Wearly, lorrainewearly@gmail.com
- Immigration – Ted Fetter, fetter4@verizon.net
- Gun Violence Protection Task Force – Diane Finn, finnflynn@verizon.net

UPCOMING EVENTS IN OUR CONGREGATIONS

What social justice initiatives and activities is your congregation planning for the new church year? Let us know so that we can share them here. And maybe you'll find something you want to bring to your congregation!

OUR DENOMINATION

From the UUA

Did you hear about the Ecological Justice Collaboratory that took place in Detroit a few weeks ago? This groundbreaking gathering of leaders from across the UU movement explored the question, "How can UUs help to bring about a more just, sustainable, and spirit-filled society and economy?" Read about it at <http://uuministryforearth.org/Ecological-Justice-Collaboratory>.

April Justice Action News: http://org.salsalabs.com/o/1272/t/0/blastContent.jsp?email_blast_KEY=1296244

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Message to President Obama: Make Torture Report Public

Americans have a right to know about our government's role in torture. I support the Senate Intelligence Committee's recent decision to declassify key sections of its report on the CIA's use of torture. Now the report must be released to the public! Please ensure that the review process is carried out quickly and that the only redactions made are those truly necessary for national security. Your decision at the beginning of your presidency to end the use of torture by the United States was a crucial step toward restoring fundamental values and the rule of law in interrogations. The release of this report, which would shine a light on the abuses of the past, is also essential.

Add your name to this message by clicking here:

http://actnow.uusc.org/site/PageNavigator/Petition_Obama_for_Truth_on_Torture_2014.html

UU-United Nations Office:

The annual Intergenerational Spring Seminar on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was held the first week in April. The keynote address can be viewed on demand at:

<http://webtv.un.org/search/rights-of-indigenous-peoples-unitarian-universalist-un-office-intergenerational-spring-seminar-2014/3445495472001?term=indigenous>

NY Metro District: www.uumetrony.org

Save the date for the 2014 District Annual Meeting May 2-3 at the Hyatt Morristown in Morristown NJ. Register at <http://uumetrony.org/am14/index.htm>.

Joseph Priestley District: www.jpduua.org

Central East Regional Group: www.cerguua.org/

CERG resources by topic: <http://uumetrony.org/am14/index.htm>

On demand webinars: <http://www.cerguua.org/moodle/>

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Do you have an event or announcement that you would like included in our bulletin? We would especially like to include news about the many social justice events and initiatives that New Jersey's UU congregations are involved with. Send an email to director@uulmnj.org and let us know what you are up to so that we can share it with others across our state.



**UULMNJ Executive Director's Annual Report
April 5, 2014**

It has been an exciting year for the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of New Jersey. UULMNJ has grown, the legislative advocacy has been more clearly articulated and visible, and the UULMNJ operation has become more organized. This is due to many factors including committed task forces and volunteers, additional staff, some enhanced funding and a huge boost from the NJ courts.

Marriage Equality is now legal in New Jersey. UU congregations responded to a call for collaboration with New Jersey United for Marriage (NJUM) by raising \$9000 to hire a full time organizer to work through UU congregations and with NJUM. James deBoer was hired in October to help coordinate our legislative visits, letter and phone call campaigns. No one could have ever imagined that the campaign would be over a month and a half later. After thirty years of fighting for Marriage Equality in New Jersey, we won. James was able to continue part-time until February, helping to organize a new Ending Jim Crow Task Force and the new Reproductive Justice initiative.

UULMNJ was active in many other issues as well. More in depth information can be found in the Task Force Annual Reports. This is just a brief overview:

- Minimum Wage Referendum: voter registration and education
- Sandy Relief Funds for Affordable Housing: Testimony and letter campaign
- Gun Violence Prevention (nine bills): Testimony, phone & letter campaigns, legislative visits, speaker at vigils
- Municipality Gun Procurement Practices Advocacy
- Fracking Waste Ban: Letter campaign and Testimony
- Energy 350 Sustainability Advocacy
- Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI): Governor letter campaign
- In-State Tuition for "dreamers": Testimony and letter campaign
- Immigrant Detention Policy: 1000 Letter Campaign
- Bail Reform: Testimony
- Opportunity To Compete (brand new)
- Reproductive Justice support of local clinics

UULMNJ advocacy is not limited to the legislature. In conjunction with ACLU, UULMNJ is a plaintiff in a separation of church and state court case concerning the potential awarding of higher education public bond funds to private religious institutions. This action, along with the marriage equality court decision has inspired a new UULMNJ Legislative Advocacy Project initiative. More detail on this program is available in the Plenary Packet.

UULMNJ serves three functions for member congregations. First it articulates the moral imperative of an issue. It then educates its membership with factual information, and then using those tools, it

advocates for justice. Accordingly, UULMNJ has developed policy briefs and fact sheets for most issues we have addressed. These tools enable any minister or congregation member to quickly understand and respond to important issues as they arise. UULMNJ professional looking materials, brochures and packets are now available for legislative visits.

This year UULMNJ inaugurated its first electronic advocacy campaigns. Salsa, an online advocacy program, has given us the ability to launch electronic letter and petition campaigns, expand data base capabilities and facilitate electronic fund raising. This has been funded through a grant from the UU Funding Program. The grant also funds the Administrative Assistant, Tara Wildhagen, who is becoming quite proficient in Salsa use. UULMNJ also received a \$1500 grant from the New York State Universalists. UULMNJ received a \$1500 Standing on the Side of Love Grant in support of the Marriage Equality campaign. However, given the quickness of the campaign, that grant was returned.

With the UU Funding Program grant support, Tara's position was increased from ten to fifteen hours per week. This year, the board increased the executive director's hours to 25 hours a week which helped expand the position to meet more of its demands. This was provided through operating funds.

Other executive director activity over the course of the year has included the following:

- Inter agency collaboration with numerous like minded organizations including Fair Share Housing, Anti-Poverty Network, Coalition of Religious Leaders, Interfaith Round Table, ACLU, Building One New Jersey, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, Food and Water Watch, and other issue oriented agencies.
- Grant writing
- Training: Congregational social action revitalization workshop (Cherry Hill);
- Preaching, worship and forum programs to local congregations (12 last year and three this year)
- State Advocacy Networks (SANS) (UUA) executive committee
- General Assembly Workshop Planning and Participation (SANS)
- Assisting the UULMNJ board with fund raising efforts
- Monthly liaison and task force (six) conference calls; bi-annual task force chair meetings, monthly board meetings
- Monthly UULMNJ reports at the New Jersey Ministers' meetings

Obviously, this much activity would not be possible with such a small staff if it weren't for the hard work and dedication of the UULMNJ board, our congregational leaders, members and ministers. It is through the effort of our volunteers that we are able to accomplish what we have. There is still plenty of room to grow and expand, but our volunteers will always be the heart of UULMNJ. So, thank you for your support and help. UULMNJ would not be possible without you!

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Craig Hirshberg
Executive Director