



UULMNJ BULLETIN AUGUST 2014

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Tomorrow morning I leave for a week of silence. That's right, I will be at a silent retreat for seven days. This is something I do almost every year, taking an annual pilgrimage to the Insight Meditation Center in Barre, MA. It is a time for me to do a little spiritual housecleaning. It is not for everyone, but for me, it is like two weeks at a spa and a year of therapy. I'm taking a break from the all the emails and phone calls, governor's vetoes and campaign actions, to renew my spirit.

I hope that all of our UULMNJ friends find some time to do the same. Our work can take its toll on our psyche if we do not take the time to nurture that which centers and grounds us. For some it might be nature, for others prayer, for others a travel adventure, but for me it is letting go and completely disengaging from *everything*, even if it is only for a week. Nothing gives one more clarity than removing oneself from all the sources of mind attachment. I highly recommend it.

I return to an exciting Fall, with The Peoples Climate March on Sept. 21 followed by our UULMNJ Issues Workshop on Sept. 27. I hope you will join me in these worthwhile events. They, too, nurture the spirit.

Faithfully,
Rev. Craig Hirshberg
Executive Director



SAVE THE DATE – UULMNJ FALL ISSUES WORKSHOP – SEPTEMBER 27 IN PARAMUS

Please plan on joining us at the UULMNJ Fall Issues Workshop, on Saturday, September 27, at the Central Unitarian Church in Paramus (<http://cucparamus.com>).

Highlights of the event will include:

- Keynote speaker Udi Ofer, Executive Director, ACLU of New Jersey
- Important Task Force meetings
 - Immigration
 - Economic Justice
 - Environment
 - Health Care/Reproductive Justice
 - Gun Violence Prevention
 - Criminal Justice Reform/End the New Jim Crow
- Discuss current issues and how you can work, and take action, with UULMNJ in your home congregation
- Dialogue with UULMNJ advocacy friends from around New Jersey

For more information and to register go to www.uulmnj.org.

UULMNJ MAKING CONNECTIONS

With the United Church of Christ

UULMNJ and the United Church of Christ (UCC) representatives in New Jersey held a joint meeting/cookout July 25 hosted by Rev. Craig and Rev. David Popham, Regional Associate Director of UCC. The group began to explore potential collaboration between UU and UCC congregations in New Jersey

With the Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey

Every year the Anti-Poverty Network convenes an Anti-Poverty Summit to bring together advocates to strategize and network for the coming year on issues related to housing, hunger, and economic empowerment. Rev. Craig is on the Planning Committee for this year's summit, scheduled for Thursday, December 4 in Monroe. More information to come.

With the Center for American Progress

Levels of gun violence remain unacceptably high in this country. Every day, five women are murdered with guns in the United States, a large percentage of whom are killed by their intimate partners. Enacting strong laws and policies to prevent domestic abusers from having easy access to guns is therefore critical to reducing murders of women.

The event, *Protecting Women from Gun Violence*, was organized by the Center for American Progress to explore policy solutions to protect women from gun violence. Rev. Craig attended this event as a guest of CAP. Links to CAP's report, *Women Under the Gun: How Gun Violence Affects Women and 4 Policy Solutions to Better Protect Them* and their fact sheet can be found at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/guns-crime/view/>. Watch the event video at <http://www.americanprogress.org/events/2014/05/29/90595/gun-violence-is-a-womens-issue/>.

UULMNJ LEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT UPDATE

The mission of the Legal Advocacy Project (LAP) is to advocate through the New Jersey State and Federal Courts to advance cases that are consistent with the seven UU principles and that generally encompass at least one of the subject matters of the UUMNJ taskforces.

A \$5,000 contribution has been received to fund LAP's initial work, which is now underway. LAP will:

- Continue as amicus curiae in the case *Guamen v. Velez* Docket, Supreme Court of New Jersey
- Appear as amicus curiae in the cases of *Hassan v. City of NY*, Third Circuit Court of Appeals and *Garden State Bar Assn, et al*, (NJ Board of Public Utilities)

Thank you to Gary Nissenbaum (UU Summit) for agreeing to be the Legal Advocacy Project's first legal director.

UULMNJ WORKS WITH UU SANS AT GA

General Assembly 2014 included a SANs (UU State Advocacy Network) Workshop, *Tools for Organizing: State Advocacy Networks in Action*. This was the first SANS workshop offered at GA. The workshop and materials were organized by UULMNJ in conjunction with other State Advocacy Networks, and Rev. Craig was one of the speakers. In the words of a local supporter, "New Jersey sure looked good." Thank you to all who turned out in support.

State Advocacy Networks are active in 17 states, including Pennsylvania and Maryland. <http://uustatenetworks.org/>. SANS recently received a \$20,000 grant earmarked for development purposes. Rev. Craig serves on the SANS Executive Committee.

Watch a video about SANS at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_mEpK5lNyo.

UULMNJ – IN THE WORKS

UULMNJ was fortunate enough to receive two UUA College of Social Justice interns this summer, Richelle Perry from Missouri and Elana Cohen from Washington State, who each worked for 25 hours per week for us. UULMNJ covered the costs of one through a grant from the New York State Universalists, with the College of Social Justice covering the costs of the second. And we are grateful to the families in Summit who opened their homes to provide housing for the interns' time in New Jersey.

Richelle was very helpful in pulling together materials for the General Assembly SANs workshop. She has also been working on the development of **Rapid Response Teams**. She initiated outreach to ministers and liaisons to introduce the project and seek their assistance as we begin to recruit members, and put together resource materials for the training of those teams.

Elana initiated work on five community access **TV programs**, with study guides, featuring our task forces' current issues. When they are completed, the videos and study guides will be made available to congregations to facilitate hosting forums and lifespan RE programs. Elana's internship was supported in part by a grant from the New York State Universalists.

UULMNJ is exploring the formation of a **young adult leaders advocacy program**. Our interns, UULMNJ administrator Laurice Grae, Rutgers student Ethan Anderson, and Rev. Craig met to determine how to move forward. The first step will be to assemble a steering committee of young adults. Concurrently, there is a NJ group attempting to start a campus ministry at Rutgers.

Please contact Rev. Craig at director@uulmnj.org if you are interested in working on any of these projects.

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. If you are willing to serve as a rapid responder in your district, please contact Rev. Craig at director@uulmnj.org.

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, UULMNJ President Frances Prestianni (fprestianni@gmail.com), 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

UULMNJ Task Force Updates

Criminal Justice Reform, End the New Jim Crow, Task Force

The task force saw its current priorities realized with the passage Bail Reform legislation and the Opportunity to Compete Act!

UULMNJ collected and about 500 letters to the NJ Senate President and to the Assembly Speaker, made phone calls, and provided testimony supporting Bail Reform legislation (A1910/S946) and placing a constitutional referendum (ACR177/SCR128) on the ballot in November, as well as issuing alerts on the Opportunity to Compete Act. UULMNJ worked in coalition with lead organizations NJ Drug Policy Alliance and the NJ Institute for Social Justice to move towards justice, fairness, and public safety. Read more: NJ DPA: Bail Reform: <http://www.drugpolicy.org/news/2014/08/new-jersey-assembly-passes-major-bail-reform-legislation-which-now-moves-governor-chris>

See the NJISJ for more on the Opportunity to Compete Act:

<http://www.njisj.org/2014/06/legislature-passes-the-opportunity-to-compete-act/>

Chair: Al Stawsky, alynways@gmail.com

Economic Justice

Task Force Chair Lorraine Wearley and Rev. Craig met with aides to Assemblyman Bramnick (Republican Leader) earlier this summer and provided him the Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey's budget requests and legislative priorities. In follow-up, the aides replied that Rep. Bramnick was supportive and forwarded the list of priorities to the appropriate committee members. See more info at <http://hcdnnj.memberclicks.net/policy-priorities>.

Rev. Craig also met with Senator Kean to discuss economic justice issues.

Chair: Lorraine Wearley lorrainewearley@gmail.com

Environmental Justice

The primary focus of the task force was the passage of legislation to ban the transportation, treatment, disposal, and storage of hydraulic fracking waste in the state of New Jersey. As part of this effort, Rev. Craig spoke at a vigil in Trenton. The bill passed both the Senate and Assembly, but was then vetoed by the governor.

Rohn Hein and Sally Gellert have been attending meetings for NJ Free, a broad-based coalition of organizations working on transitioning New Jersey's economy to one based on renewable energy (<http://mseia.net/solar/nj-free/>). UULMNJ also presented testimony at a Senate hearing on energy and the environment.

The People's Climate March will take place on September 21 in New York City. UULMNJ is a participating organization, as is the UU Metro NY District and UUSC. <http://peoplesclimate.org/march/>

Chair: Rohn Hein, rohn@netzero.net.

Gun Violence Prevention

The gun violence prevention task force continues to work with New Jersey Together to get New Jersey municipalities to use their buying power to get gun manufacturers to stop selling to rogue dealers and invest in smart gun technology.

The task force also worked on legislation to limit gun ammunition magazines from a maximum of 15 rounds to 10 rounds. This was passed by the Senate and Assembly, but subsequently vetoed by the governor. Two eloquent op-eds ran in the Star Ledger following the veto, by a Newtown parent, “My Child Isn’t Trivial”

(http://www.nj.com/opinion/index.ssf/2014/07/newtown_dad_to_chris_christie_my_child_isnt_trivial_opinion.html) and by CT governor Dannel Malloy, “Chris Christie Missed a Chance to Save Lives” (http://www.nj.com/opinion/index.ssf/2014/07/conn_gov_molloy_chris_christie_missed_chance_to_save_lives_opinion.html)

Chair: Diane Finn finnflynn@verizon.net

Immigration

Delegates at the UUA General Assembly 2014 passed an Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) (<http://www.uua.org/statements/statements/296757.shtml>) calling on UUs to join national faith leaders and immigrant rights advocates from across the nation on July 31st - August 2nd to call on the White House to stop the deportations of immigrants and end the unjust laws tearing apart families, communities and congregations. It also called on UUs to support the National Day Laborer Organizing Network #Not1More Deportation Campaign. Go to <http://www.notonemoredeportation.com/> for more info and to sign their petition to President Obama.

And from Standing on the Side of Love: <http://standingonthesideoflove.org/blog/may-we-be-loves-defenders-take-action-for-families-today/>

U.S. Religious Leaders Embrace Cause of Immigrant Children:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/24/us/us-religious-leaders-embrace-cause-of-immigrant-children.html>

Chair: Ted Fetter fetter4@verizon.net

Reproductive Justice

Rev. Kathleen Green organized a religious liberty demonstration in Totowa at a new Hobby Lobby store in response to the Supreme Court’s Hobby Lobby ruling. Members of the National Organization for Women’s New Jersey chapter, the League of Women Voters of New Jersey and Planned Parenthood also participated. <http://www.northjersey.com/news/protesters-picket-new-hobby-lobby-store-in-totowa-1.1050410>

Many of us have been concerned about the recent court rulings concerning health care. We would like to share some insight from our friends at Families USA:

Court Ruling Withdrawing Affordable Care Act Premium Subsidies from Low- and Moderate-Income Families ‘Will Never Go Into Effect’ - Court Ruling Likely to be ‘Stayed’; Rehearing by Full Appeals Court Probable and Likely to Reverse Decision; and 4th Circuit Court of Appeals Also Expected to Dismiss Lawsuit

<http://familiesusa.org/press-release/2014/court-ruling-withdrawing-affordable-care-act-premium-subsidies-low-and-moderate>

Chair: Rev. Kathleen Green (Reproductive Justice) usr.minister@verizon.net

SIGN UP FOR UULMNJ NEWS AND ACTION ALERTS

Do you want to get more information about upcoming events, educational events, local legislation, and action alerts? Please send your contact information to admin@uulmnj.org and we will sign you up. And follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/uulmnj) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/uulmnj>)!

OUR DENOMINATION

From the UUA

Announcing the 2014-2015 UUA Common Read

Reclaiming Prophetic Witness: Liberal Religion in the Public Square by Paul Rasor is the 2014-2015 UUA Common Read. In this inspiring call to action, Rasor dispels the myth that conservative Christianity is the only valid religious voice in national debates on social policy, and shows us that the powerful support of religious liberals may be more numerous than we realize.

<http://callandresponse.blogs.uua.org/reading-in-common-and-reclaiming-prophetic-witness/>

UUA President Issues Statement on Violence in Ferguson

As religious people who are committed to compassion and justice, what are we to do?

<http://www.uua.org/news/pressroom/pressreleases/297092.shtml>

Enjoy Streaming Video, Photos, and Reports from General Assembly in Providence at www.uua.org/ga/virtual/2014/index.shtml.

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Update on UUSC's efforts around the Detroit Water Shut-offs

www.uusc.org/updates/update-on-detroit-water-shutoffs

UUSC Statement on the Gaza Conflict - www.uusc.org/updates/uuscs-statement-on-the-gaza-conflict

UU-United Nations Office

Top 10 Resources for International Engagement - www.uua.org/international/engagement/index.shtml

NY Metro District: www.uumetrony.org

Presentations from the 2014 District Annual Meeting are now available on YouTube. Included are the keynote address by Carey McDonald and five workshops. For YouTube links see

<http://uumetrony.org/misc/materials.htm>.

Joseph Priestley District: www.jpduua.org

The 2014 Joseph Priestley District Assembly Keynote Address given by Rev. Katherine McTigue, Director of UU College of Social Justice, is up for viewing on YouTube.

<http://www.jpduua.org/news-and-notes/watch-keynote-address-district-assembly>

Central East Regional Group: www.cerguua.org/

Looking for videos from GA, CERG workshops, District Assembly and more?

Check the CERG YouTube Channel <http://ow.ly/zJ33j>

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.