



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST LEGISLATIVE MINISTRY
OF NEW JERSEY

A Voice for Justice, Equality and Compassion in New Jersey

DECEMBER 2012

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Season's Greetings to our UULMNJ Family,

The end of 2012 has not been easy for those of us living in New Jersey. Storm Sandy has brought us face to face with the power of nature, the tragic losses and the continuing efforts needed to fully recover as a state. The senseless shootings in Newtown, CT, have reminded us all of the fragility of life and the need for improved, sane solutions for safety. By all accounts, it has been a rough couple of months on New Jersey's collective psyche.



Yet, one also cannot ignore the outpouring of the human spirit as people throughout New Jersey and beyond respond with acts of generosity and compassion to those among us with great needs. We have witnessed incredible acts of bravery, tender acts of kindness, generous acts of giving. And with each small act comes a message of hope --- hope and courage to gather together and begin again.

This is the yin and yang of this December's holiday season. In the midst of tragedy and struggle, we still find reasons to celebrate. We renew our appreciation for loved ones and all they bring. We gather in greater understanding of the connection we have to each other in our communities. We stand in awe of the fortitude of those who have suffered loss. Most importantly, we celebrate the grace of just being able to be together as the human spirit rises up and ushers in a new beginning of a new year.

May this holiday season bring greater love and joy to you and all whom you meet. May your new year be filled with peace and serenity.

Faithfully,
Rev. Craig Hirshberg
Executive Director

A CALL TO ACTION FOR GUN CONTROL

All of us are still in shock about the horrible tragedy in Newtown, CT. Our congregations around the state have responded with many worship, pastoral and public opportunities to mourn and to support victims' families. This is a time to gather in spirit, for none of us is immune to the impact of this terrible loss. We encourage you to take the time to express whatever you are feeling, to utilize the pastoral presence of your UU community and to be present at the public vigils at this time. We also encourage you to celebrate the holidays with renewed appreciation for family and friends, for life lives on through us.

UULMNJ Public Policy Network Statement on Gun Control

Unitarian Universalists have called for greater gun control for over twenty-two years. In the wake of far too many mass shootings and killings across our country, over recent weeks, months and years, The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of New Jersey Public Policy Network puts forth this statement as representative of our stand for gun control and against gun violence. Recognizing that 34 people are killed as a result of gun violence in this country on any given day – that someone’s mother, father, sister, brother or child is struck down every 45 minutes – we urge those of the legislative and executive branches of our state and federal governments to act with all due haste to bring an end to our domestic urban and rural killing fields, where so many innocents have needlessly lost their lives.

First put forth in the General Resolution passed, through a democratic process of Unitarian Universalist congregations, at the UUA General Assembly of 1991 (and updated in August, 2011), this resolution provides a comprehensive statement of conscience and action regarding the conditions of an unregulated gun culture and the need to pursue a sane and responsible end to that culture. Recognizing that turning our public schools, playgrounds or other institutions into armed camps is not a viable or protective solution, and recognizing that within the issue of gun control, there is also a strong need to provide public programs of responsible care for mentally ill persons, we renew our commitment and call to action to this Unitarian Universalist Association General Resolution on gun control: <http://www.uulmnjppn.org/index.php/12-news-events/uulmnjppn-news-and-events/112-statement-on-gun-control>.

CONNECT WITH UULMNJ ON OUR NEW FACEBOOK PAGE

Thanks to youth board member Adam Green (Unitarian Society of Ridgewood), UULMNJ has a new Facebook page! Like us at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Unitarian-Universalist-Legislative-Ministry-of-New-Jersey-UULMNJ/84778023198>.

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.

HURRICANE SANDY UPDATE

The **UU Congregation of Monmouth County** (Lincroft NJ) responded to Hurricane Sandy through the efforts of the congregation’s minister, the Rev. Virginia Jarocho-Ernst, and the congregation’s “caring neighborhoods.” Writes Rich Held, congregation president, “Two things we know for sure: the UUCMC is a caring community, and our support of the recovery from Sandy has just begun.” <http://uumetrony.org/metronyminute/dec12/Lincroft.pdf>

UULMNJ Vice President, Gail Marsh Saxer (**Ocean County**) forwarded the following link, saying, “These photos will give you a better perspective on the damage Sandy wrecked upon our barriers islands--in this case Ortley Beach.” <http://tomsriver.patch.com/articles/long-road-ahead-for-ortley-beach>

Despite **Murray Grove Retreat and Renewal Center's** being battered by Hurricane Sandy, no one was hurt and the facility came through with only moderately severe damage. Once power

was restored, the facility was immediately made available as emergency housing for volunteer recovery workers and displaced persons. A preliminary estimate of \$12,000 in uninsured expenses is anticipated. An emergency fund raising drive has been launched; contributions can be made by check to the Murray Grove Retreat and Renewal Center, PO Box 246, Lanoka Harbor NJ 08734 or online at <http://www.murraygrove.org/>

The **CERG UU Disaster Relief Fund** has collected more than \$207,000 for Hurricane Sandy disaster relief in the CERG region and has awarded more than \$48,000 so far. Priorities for funding are assisting UU congregations with the costs of repairing their buildings and grounds from storm damage, helping members recover from storm losses, and supporting UU congregations who are working on storm relief with community partners. Apply at <https://ohiomeadville.wufoo.com/forms/m7m3w7/>.

The **First Unitarian Society of Plainfield** raised \$1156 in their collection on November 11th, for hurricane relief. The Board of Trustees voted to give this money to the CERG UU Disaster Relief Fund.

The **Bergen UU Relief Group (BUURG)**, formed by congregations in **Englewood, Paramus, and Ridgewood**, held a highly successful benefit concert on December 1 to raise funds for three local non-profits providing relief for victims of Hurricane Sandy. Eight bands and performers donated their talents for free, and all production costs, food, beverages, and artists' CDs were fully donated as well. Nearly \$9,000 was collected. BUURG continues to organize volunteers in the field providing storm relief. <http://uumetrony.org/metronymminute/dec12/BUURG.pdf>

Disasters have a way of bringing out the best in people, and it's really quite amazing what a difference just a few people can make. In only one and a half weeks' time, two members of the **Skylands Unitarian Universalist Fellowship** and a group of committed volunteers organized and staged a benefit concert for Hurricane Sandy relief. "Sky to Shore," held Thanksgiving weekend at Skylands UU Fellowship, netted more than \$2,000 in cash and carloads of personal care items for people at the Jersey Shore struggling to put their lives back together. http://www.examiner.com/article/benefit-concert-at-skylands-uu-raises-more-than-2-000-for-hurricane-relief?CID=examiner_alerts_article

[This article was written by Michael Dalzell, a member of the UU Church at Washington Crossing, part of an ongoing series for examiner.com. See Mike's past articles and subscribe at <http://www.examiner.com/unitarian-universalism-in-newark/michael-dalzell>.]

ISSUES – GET INVOLVED

Want to get involved in UULMNJ and help make our voices heard? Join a task force:

- **Economic Justice:** Lorraine Wearley, loraingwearley@gmail.com.
- **Environment:** The Environment Task Force has an open position for their chair. Please contact Rev. Craig if you are interested in this volunteer position.
- **Health Care:** Carolyn Baldacchini, cal6balda@yahoo.com
- **Immigration:** Ted Fetter, fetter4@verizon.net
- **Marriage Equality Task Force:** Marty Rothfelder, mrothfelder@verizon.net
- See www.uulmnj.org for more task force/issue information.

If you would like to volunteer in another way such as serving on a committee, have a skill or talent to share, or want to be contacted to help with one-time tasks, contact director@uulmnj.org.

The **Immigration Task Force** invites all New Jersey UUs to send a letter to President Obama. They're calling the letter-writing campaign "1000 Voices for Immigration Justice," and want to deliver these letters to him by Inauguration Day, January 21, 2013. The purpose of the letter is to challenge the President to more closely follow his own Administration's immigration policies. One policy not well enough followed now is to use more alternatives to detention for immigrants who are picked up and usually detained while deportation proceedings take place. The research is clear that less secure and more family-friendly alternatives like ankle bracelets and daily check-ins are much less costly and have a very successful rate of appearances -- better than 93%. The other policy not strongly enough followed is the use of discretion in picking up immigrants for deportation. The President said that prosecutors would concentrate on those who threaten public safety or national security, but we see thousands of immigrants held for deportation with no criminal record and no perceived threat.

So look over the sample letter online or at your congregation and please sign it and send it! Join your fellow New Jersey UUs in asking the President to do what he said he would do!
<http://www.uulmnj.org/issues/current-priority-issues/immigration-policy-reform/151-1000-voices-for-immigration-justice.html>.

The **Economic Justice Task Force** would like people to send letters to our Governor asking him to sign the minimum wage increase bill on his desk. The New Jersey State Legislature has approved legislation (A2162) raising the state minimum wage and linking it to annual increases in the cost of living (also known as the Cost of Living Adjustment, or COLA). The bill calls for an increase to \$8.50 per hour from the current \$7.25 per hour and an annual adjustment linked to any increase in COL. See <http://www.uulmnj.org/issues/current-priority-issues/economic-justice/149-increase-the-minimum-wage.html>.

The NY Metro District **Environmental Justice Council** will meet on February 9, 2013, from 10:30 am-1:30 pm. The location is yet to be determined. Register at the UU Justice Web (<http://www.uujusticeweb.org/>) or contact the Rev. Peggy Clarke (pclarke@uuma.org) or Frances Sink (frances.sink@gmail.com) for information.

UUA: Reproductive Justice: New Curriculum and Resources: A brand new six-week curriculum from the Unitarian Universalist Association titled, "Reproductive Justice: Expanding Our Social Justice Calling," will equip Unitarian Universalists with tools for effective public advocacy, tie us to our theological and historical resources, help us understand the complexities of reproductive justice, and strengthen our relationships with each other.

Curriculum: <http://www.uua.org/reproductive/calling/curriculum/index.shtml>

More from Reproductive Justice: <http://www.uua.org/reproductive/index.shtml>

January 22, 2013 marks the 40th anniversary of the landmark Roe v. Wade case which made abortion legal in the United States. The UUA is partnering with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) to create a preaching resource on the anniversary, including

readings, questions, statistics, and stories. Contact the Rev. Rob Keithan, Director of Public Policy at RCRC, (rkeithan@rcrc.org) to be notified when the resource will be released.

IMMIGRATION AS A MORAL ISSUE – UUA CONGREGATIONAL STUDY/ACTION ISSUE 2010–2014

At General Assembly in 2010, Immigration as a Moral Issue was selected as the UUA Congregational Study Action Issue for the next four years. Congregations and districts were encouraged to begin programs of education and reflection, service, community organizing, advocacy, and public witness.

On November 15, 2012, the CSW presented a draft Statement of Conscience (SOC) on immigration. The draft statement and a ballot to place the SOC on the agenda of GA 2013 will be included in the annual congregational poll, conducted with annual membership certification.

On February 1, 2013, the congregational poll ballots are due, with a quorum of 25% of congregational members participating. This is also the deadline for submission of comments on the draft SOC. All congregations are encouraged to consider and respond to the draft SOC.

At the General Assembly 2013 the Statement of Conscience will be considered. Approval requires a 2/3 vote of delegates. If the SOC is adopted in 2013, an Implementation Year Workshop will be held on it at General Assembly 2014, concluding the Study/Action cycle. For more information, www.uua.org/immigration/re/moral/172548.shtml.

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

The **UU Church in Cherry Hill** is hosting the Joseph Priestley District Worship Arts Festival on February 22-23, 2013. <http://www.jpduua.org/news-and-notes/2013-jpd-worship-arts-festival>

The **Morristown Unitarian Fellowship** is holding its 27th annual benefit concert to benefit the people of Central America at 8pm on Saturday, January 26. The headliner this year is the captivating artist Christine Lavin who "knows how to keep her audience guessing, thinking, and laughing at the same time" according to the *Washington Post*. Opening for Ms. Lavin is Jean Rohe and Ilusha Tsinadze. Jean is a multi-lingual singer and composer of American folk music, Brazilian and Afro-Peruvian traditions. Tickets are \$25 in advance available by email from admin@muuf.org (must be picked up by 7:30 night of concert) or \$30 at the door.

The Green Sanctuary Committee of the **UU Fellowship of Sussex County** sent a letter to Senate President Sweeney advocating for the passage of SCR59 to stop the NJ Department of Environmental Protection waiver rule, saying, "This DEP waiver rule goes well beyond legislative intent and would actually break the law. The citizens of New Jersey are counting on our lawmakers to protect our clean air and water." Three members attended a public hearing in Hardyston Twp. on December 3 and read the letter. A number of other northwest NJ environmental groups also sent representatives who made statements. The Waiver Rule establishes circumstances under which DEP may waive compliance with certain Department rules.

The **Unitarian Church in Summit** unveiled a banner on the front of its building on December 9 supporting full legal recognition of same-sex marriage. The banner reads “Say ‘I Do’ to Marriage Equality” and was designed by graphic designers within the church. Church members discussed the issue last June at the church’s annual meeting and voted to take the stand supporting marriage equality for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people
http://www.nj.com/independentpress/index.ssf/2012/12/unitarian_church_in_summit_unv.html

The **UU Congregation of Princeton** will host Tamara Payne-Alex and Jim Key, the two candidates for the position of UUA Moderator, on January 20 at 3pm, to talk about their vision for Unitarian Universalism and how they would lead if elected at General Assembly 2013. The 90-minute program will include a question and answer period and will be followed by a reception.

FROM OUR DENOMINATION

December 2012 Multicultural Growth and Witness Newsletter
http://www.uua.org/documents/idbm/bulletin_mgw.pdf

UU Justice Action News – December 2012

http://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/1272/t/0/blastContent.jsp?email_blast_KEY=1262515

The Fund for UU Social Responsibility has set aside \$25,000 to be made available as matching grants of \$500-\$1,500 to UU congregations participating in the Standing on the Side of Love campaign. SSL matching grants will support UU congregations mobilizing at critical times, using social networking and coalition building to take action in a broad range of arenas where people are excluded, oppressed, or attacked based on real or perceived identities.
<http://www.uua.org/giving/funding/102184.shtml>

The **Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries** Staff Group has been working to improve their web presence to make it more user-friendly, straightforward, and true to the work being done with leaders and communities across the UUA. The new site now offers links, entry points, and UU programs for engaging in multicultural ministry; the brand-new UUA study guide for *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, the UUA's 2012-2013 Common Read; background on the "Doctrine of Discovery" resolution from Justice General Assembly and how to take action; and information about the Multicultural Leadership Institute. Visit the website at www.uua.org/multiculturalism.

NY Metro District: www.uumetrony.org Joseph Priestley District: www.jpduua.org
Central East Regional Group: www.cerguua.org/. CERG is offering a wide variety of webinars this winter, see <http://www.cerguua.org/calendars/cergwebinars.html> for the schedule. On-demand webinars are also available, go to <http://www.cerguua.org/moodle/> for information.

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.