



UULMNJ BULLETIN

JUNE 2014

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

There is a young couple who is very dear to me. Their house was underwater after the financial downfall and they have scrimped and saved for five years to pay down their mortgage enough so that they could move. Their family is expanding and in need a larger home.

Recently, there was a talk of repealing the realty transfer fee tax on home sales. These funds help create housing opportunities in viable neighborhoods for households of low and moderate income, support shelter assistance, the State Rental Assistance Program and other affordable housing initiatives. These are important programs that beg us to sacrifice for them.

So here is the liberal's dilemma. The saved taxes would certainly help this young family increase the down payment on a new house or help in numerous other ways. And I, generally, would certainly support anything that could help them. Yet, the transfer fee funds are doing so much for those who have even less. Is it fair to ask to ask this young couple to sacrifice what they have eked from the sale of their house to support housing for the greater community? The answer is simple for me, but I live in a nice house and can afford the fee. The answer is not so simple for them or others in their situation.

Please understand, this letter is not about transfer fees. It is about sacrifice. How much are we willing to sacrifice in the name of social justice? To what degree are we willing to suffer in order to lessen the suffering of others? These are not easy questions. Easy is visiting a legislator, writing a letter, attending a rally, really. Delving into the depth of our commitment is much harder.

James Fowler describes six stages of faith development. The sixth is marked by a sense of self-sacrifice, a non-ego based transformative quality. Many think that faith development is about one's connection to a deity or higher power, but in reality, it is about how we live our lives. How much are we really willing to give? How much are we willing to be inconvenienced? How much are we willing to do without to bring about more compassionate communities? How much of our hard earned resources are we willing to commit to support that which is greater than ourselves?

The questions are hard because they are questions of faith. We can only begin by asking them.

Faithfully,
Rev. Craig Hirshberg



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

Watch for more information coming soon!

UULMNJ Welcomes New Office Administrator

UULMNJ is excited to announce the hiring of a new office administrator. Laurice Grae, a member of the Montclair congregation, joined the staff June 1. Laurice brings a great deal of talent and energy to the position. Her experience and creativity in social media, marketing and office organization will create strong support for our organization. Laurice's office hours are Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 9am to 3pm. She can be reached at admin@UULMNJ.org

Two Summer Interns from the UU College of Social Justice

UULMNJ is fortunate enough to receive two college interns from the UU College of Social Justice this summer. Richelle Perry, from Missouri and Elana Cohen from Washington state will be living with local families and working 25 hours a week for justice at UULMNJ. Their duties will include task force research, rapid response development, and the development of public access TV programs which will be the basis for a congregation educational program series in the Fall. Please welcome them when you see them.

UULMNJ – WHAT'S HAPPENING

There is now an excellent summary of UULMNJ's annual plenary posted on our website, including a recap the presentations by the president, executive director, the keynote presentation by Gordon MacInnes of New Jersey Policy Perspective, and task force reports. Rev. Craig's annual report is also posted on the 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>.

UULMNJ Legal Advocacy Project

The Legislative Advocacy Project has gathered approximately twenty UU attorney’s names and found two potential cases for amicus briefs. We are now working on researching and/or drafting policies for several issues, including the specific process of filing amicus briefs, what are the real court costs associated with filing amicus briefs and what kind of attorney agreement is necessary for UULMNJ pro bono work. Gary Nissenbaum (Summit) has recruited a core group, made up of Nick Lewis (Board and Montclair), Valerie Haynes (Princeton) and Jerry Sattin (Newton), to work on this. A generous gift of \$5,000 gift from a private donor will make it possible for LAP’s initial launch.

Why We Can’t Wait

Rev. Craig was invited by the UUA to attend a recent national faith leader summit on mass incarceration in Chicago, the *Interreligious Organizing Initiative’s Summit on the Intersection of Criminalization and Race*. The event brought together people who were formerly incarcerated, congregation-based community organizations, congregational representatives, policy experts, and funders. Throughout the summit, participants shared stories and statistics, brainstormed about strategies and made commitments. Read more about the summit, including actions you can take now: <http://standingonthesideoflove.org/blog/why-we-cant-wait/>.



The New Jersey Center for Social Justice held a clergy information event and press conference on April 24 to endorse The Opportunity to Compete Act, and “fulfill our moral duty to foster redemption.” Three UU ministers, Revs. Bob Janis-Dillon, Mary Tiebout and Susan Rak, were in attendance. <http://www.njsj.org/2014/04/new-jersey-faith-leaders-endorse-the-opportunity-to-compete-act-fulfilling-our-moral-duty-to-foster-redemption/>

Working in Collaboration

Rev. Craig has been collaborating with New Jersey Religious Coalition and the Anti-Poverty Network. The New Jersey Religious Coalition met with Sen. Menendez recently to discuss the issues of minimum wage and immigration. And in response to an Anti Poverty Network initiative, Lorraine Wearly and Rev. Craig are team leaders and have requested meetings with the three NJ legislators in the 21st district to discuss economic justice concerns.

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.

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

UULMNJ Task Force Current Priorities

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

- The priority of the Task Force at the present time and foreseeably through June 2014 is activity supporting the passage of two current NJ legislative actions. These are a real and meaningful Bail Reform Bill and an effective Opportunity to Compete Act. Both of these are expected to make some measurable improvement in the NJ criminal justice system and its effects.
- Chair: Al Stawsky, alynways@gmail.com
- From the UUA: Let's End Mass Incarceration
Like many of you, we have long seen mass incarceration and its devastating impact on communities of color in this country as one of the central justice concerns today. Together we are educating each other, ministering with people who are incarcerated, and taking action to dismantle the system of mass incarceration. And we are finally starting to succeed in calling attention to this crisis: the Smarter Sentencing Act, introduced in July 2013, is a bipartisan bill that would deal a landmark blow to mass incarceration. The UUA is part of an interfaith coalition urging the Senate to make this bill a priority.
http://org.salsalabs.com/o/1272/t/0/blastContent.jsp?email_blast_KEY=1298511

Economic Justice

- Economic Justice continues to monitor the disbursement of Sandy Relief funding and support the Sandy Bill of Rights, with letters to our State Representatives and local newspapers. We will make comments on the new COAH Rules by the deadline of July 2nd. We will advocate for the preservation of the Realty Transfer Tax, which helps to fund affordable housing. At the Federal level, we will consider how best to support a proposed Constitutional Amendment to counteract the Supreme Court's "Citizens United" decision.
- Chair: Lorraine Wearley lorrainewearley@gmail.com
- Legislative priorities of the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey are posted at <http://hcdnj.memberclicks.net/policy-a-advocacy>. There is also information on *Out of Reach 2014*, a national study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition. The report provides the Housing Wage and other housing affordability data for every state, metropolitan area, combined non metropolitan area, and county in the country. . The Housing Wage is the hourly wage a family must earn – working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year – to be able to afford the rent and utilities for a safe and modest home in the private housing market. The Housing Wage for New Jersey is \$24.92, making it the fourth most expensive in the nation.

Environmental Justice

- The prime focus of the Environmental Task force through June, 2014 is the bill to ban the transportation of fracking wastes in New Jersey. The bill (S-252) was voted out of the Senate Environmental Committee by a 4-1 vote and was passed by the full Senate on May 12 by a vote of 32-5. The bill (A-2108) has yet to be heard in the Assembly Environmental Committee. All of the major environmental groups will be sponsoring a Lobby Day on Monday, June 12th when it is possible that the committee will meet. The full Assembly meets on June 15th when a final vote is also possible.
- Chair: Rohn Hein, rohn@netzero.net.
- *A New, Justice-Focused Green Sanctuary Program*: Responding to the realities of the environmental crisis we are currently experiencing and the lived experiences and needs of Unitarian Universalists, the Unitarian Universalist Association's Green Sanctuary Program has been revised and the new version is now available online. <http://www.uua.org/environment/index.shtml>
- **Coalition Lobbying Day**
June 12: **Environment and Fracking**
9am – 4pm at the State House in Trenton
Contact Rohn Hein (rohn@netzero.net) or Rev. Craig (director@uulmnj.org) for more information

Gun Violence Prevention

- The gun violence task force's top priority at this time is working 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. We are also conducting public education, primarily by showing the documentary *Shell-Shocked*, and supporting legislation that would limit the size of magazines to 10 rounds.
- Chair: Diane Finn finnflynn@verizon.net

Immigration

- The Immigration Task Force priorities over the next several months extend into the fall. At the state level, we are participating in a coalition's determination to push legislation that would allow undocumented persons the legal ability to drive, either through drivers licenses or a driving privilege card. We support other efforts as they arise -- especially access to state aid for undocumented students and improved legal options to pursue wage theft. At the national level, we are restrengthening efforts to get the House of Representatives to pass some form of comprehensive immigration reform.
- Chair: Ted Fetter fetter4@verizon.net
- No More Deaths, a ministry of the UU Church of Tucson, is an organization whose mission is to end death and suffering on the U.S./Mexico border through civil the conviction that people of conscience must work openly and in community to uphold fundamental human rights. Their work embraces Faith-Based Principles for Immigration Reform. Read more at <http://www.nomoredeaths.org/>.

Reproductive Justice

- The Reproductive Justice and Healthcare Task Force is focused on gathering continued support of buffer zones and clinic escorts, as well as planning congregation trainings in reproductive justice. We are also actively seeking support for exploration into New Jersey's healthcare system and access to health services.
- Chairs: Carolyn Baldicchini (Health Care) cal6balda@yahoo.com and Rev. Kathleen Green (Reproductive Justice) usr.minister@verizon.net
- Rev. Kathleen was featured in an interview by the Center for American Progress about her role as an abortion clinic escort.
<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/religion/news/2014/05/01/88781/minister-and-clinic-escort-an-interview-with-rev-kathleen-green/>

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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.

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.

SANS AT GA

There will be a State Advocacy Networks (SANS <http://uustatenetworks.org/>) workshop at General Assembly on Thursday, June 26th. There will also be a SANS reception that evening. If you will at GA, please consider attending the workshop, and stop by the reception and meet other UU statewide activists.

OUR DENOMINATION

From the UUA

UUs join historic UCC lawsuit against North Carolina's same-sex marriage ban

In what may become a groundbreaking case in the fight for marriage equality, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ - along with two Unitarian Universalist ministers, other progressive clergy, and same-sex couples seeking to be married - has filed a federal lawsuit

arguing that North Carolina's ban on same-sex marriage violates their constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom. <http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/295334.shtml>

UUA Rebranding Featured in *Boston Magazine*

Boston Magazine looks at how the Unitarian Universalist Association came to launch its current rebranding campaign. They interview Unitarian Universalist leaders the Rev. Peter Morales, the Rev. Terasa Cooley, Dan McKanan, and David Ruffin on how they hope to reach the growing number of people with similar values but little interest in going to church.

<http://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/article/2014/05/27/unitarian-universalism-selling-god/>

More from UUA Branding: <http://www.uua.org/vision/branding/index.shtml>

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

In today's low-wage workplaces, women face a double whammy: the insidious effects of the minimum wage plus the gender pay gap. Workers of color face racial discrimination on top of it. Explore the intersections of gender, race, and the minimum wage.

<http://www.uusc.org/updates/how-to-lose-400000>

Moral Statement on the Minimum Wage – sign on today:

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

UU-United Nations Office

What is a UU-UNO Envoy? An Envoy acts to represent the UU United Nations Office within their local congregation. They connect the congregation to the UU United Nations Office and get important information on current UN activities. They receive information on our program initiatives and then plan events in their congregation to promote the program. Envoys are extremely valuable to the UU United Nations Office because they are the link between the office and the global UU community. If your congregation does not already have an Envoy or Youth Envoy, consider becoming one. Or better yet, consider forming an Envoy Committee. To join the team, contact the office, and we will get you started. Envoy Outreach Coordinator: unenvoycoordinator@uua.org. <http://www.uua.org/international/un/envoys/index.shtml>

NY Metro District: www.uumetro.org

Joseph Priestley District: www.jpduua.org

Central East Regional Group: www.cerguua.org/

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.