



UULMNJ BULLETIN JUNE 2015

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

I've been thinking a lot about what it means to truly and consciously be an activist, particularly in the area of racial justice. Does it mean writing a letter or making a phone call? Does it mean holding compassionately those who have to struggle daily from discrimination? Does it mean taking that next step to expand awareness, to educate? Although these actions are all important, they sometimes feel inadequate.

Unitarian Universalists have historically incorporated social justice as part of our faith. As a result, for many Unitarian Universalists, social action is a spiritual discipline that forces us to dig a little deeper into what it means to work for justice – and what it means to be a UU.

As Unitarian Universalists, we are compelled to delve deeper into our own understandings, to look at our own biases and limitations, to understand our own fears. Most importantly, we are called to examine and understand the relative comfort from which we operate and the benefit we enjoy from our privilege. By doing so, we are to be truly helpful to those with whom we work in coalition. It is through this examination that we may honestly and authentically be present in this work. It is through this examination that we begin to understand the appropriate relationships of collaboration with people of color as we address racism. And yes, it may necessarily take us out of our comfort zone.

An opportunity for true collaboration for racial justice is taking place this summer and our entire UU community can participate.

The *Million People's March Against Police Brutality, Racial Injustice, and Economic Inequality* will take place Saturday, July 25, at 12:00 noon, beginning at the Lincoln Monument at the intersection of West Market Street and Springfield Avenue in Newark, New Jersey. This is being organized by the People's Organization for Progress. UULMNJ is a sponsor. Flyers and additional information is being sent to your liaisons and through our mailings. Bring a bus full from your congregation. This is an excellent opportunity for UU's across the state to stand up together in body and spirit in support for racial justice. Please come march with us behind our UULMNJ "Black Lives Matter" banner as we live our values together. I hope we will see you there.

Faithfully,
Craig

director@uulmnj.org
609.672.7331



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Summer Internship Available

Are you a college student or recent graduate looking internship? Are you passionate about social justice? Do you know a young adult who fits this description? UULMNJ is hiring a summer intern! The summer intern will work closely with task forces to produce our original series YUUR Voice that airs on Princeton TV. The intern will also have the opportunity to work on our upcoming young and emerging adult program SALTA! - Spiritual Advocacy Leaders Trained for Action.

The Legislative Ministry has a new, mobile friendly website!

Explore and learn at www.UULMNJ.org. There will be a calendar for statewide congregational events. Plan on submitting community events to be added to the statewide calendar to events@uulmnj.org! And while you are there click around and see what we're up to on social media!

Planning worship for the next church year?

Remember that Rev. Craig Hirshberg is available to come to your congregation and share information on public policy in New Jersey. You can contact her at director@uulmnj.org.

Rev. Alison Miller will lead Sunday Service at GA

Rev. Alison Miller (Morristown), the President of the UULMNJ Public Policy Network, will lead the Sunday service. You can join in through live streaming; check the UUA website for GA coverage details.

Important Dates to Remember! Mark your calendar now:

- **June 22, 2015** *Women's Health* lobby day sponsored by Planned Parenthood Action Fund will focus on availability of women's health services. Register at <http://uulmnj.org/my-health-my-life-summit/>.
- **July 25, 2015** *Million People's March Against Police Brutality, Racial Injustice, and Economic Inequality*. Begins at 12:00 noon at the Lincoln Monument at the intersection of West Market Street and Springfield Avenue in Newark, NJ. Come march with other NJ Unitarian Universalists behind our UULMNJ Black Lives Matter banner. UULMNJ is a co-sponsor of the event. To register go to <https://www.facebook.com/events/418074548350082/>.
- **September 12, 2015:** *Training and strategizing for task force leadership and congregational liaisons at the UU Church at Washington Crossing in Titusville.*
- **October 17, 2015:** *UULMNJ Issues Conference* in Summit. Details to follow.
- **April 16, 2016:** *UULMNJ Plenary and Annual Meeting* in Cherry Hill. Details to follow.

UULMNJ 6TH ANNUAL PLENARY – 2015

Welcome to Our New Board Members

About 90 UUs gathered at the UU Congregation at Montclair for UULMNJ's Annual Plenary. Meeting business included electing new board members and adopting a 2015 - 2016 budget.

New board members elected to serve on the UULMNJ and UULMNJPPN Boards of Trustees, effective July 1, 2015:

- Amy Tiedemann (Hunterdon County)
- Lessie Culmer-Nier (Summit)
- William Slezak (Essex County)
- Rev. Tracy Sprowls (Plainfield)

Continuing to serve on the boards are Frances Prestianni (Princeton), Alison Miller (Morristown), Andrea Lerner (NY Metro District Executive), Rev. Bill Neely (Princeton), Carolyn Baldacchini (Summit), Al Stawsky (Palisades) and Judy Strachan (Montclair). Ethan Anderson (East Brunswick) will continue to serve as our young adult representative.

Nick Lewis (Montclair), Rev. Kathleen Green (Ridgewood), Toby Tyler (Morristown), and Missy Staples (Somerset Hills) will be rotating off of the boards.

Annual reports from the Executive Director and Board Presidents are at the end of this bulletin. Materials from the Annual Meeting packets are posted on our website at <http://uulmnj.org/uulmnj-6th-annual-plenary-april-2015-welcome-new-board-members-materials/>.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I end two years serving the Legislative Ministry Board as President, I would like to thank each of you for your commitment to our advocacy. Our organization depends on so many people...

- The task force chairs and members who work on developing our issues, materials and ways for us to act working with other advocacy groups;
- Congregational liaisons who bring our advocacy actions to congregations giving them the opportunity to act;
- Board committees and programs that fulfill specific organizational needs;
- All of you who respond to Salsa requests, sign letters and participate in demonstrations and meetings to make our UU beliefs.

It is your creativity and commitment and generous donation of time that have made it possible to accomplish so much. We have had clear successes in bail reform, fair share housing, minimum wages and marriage equality, to name a few issues. But even when we do not prevail on the substantive issue, we are still successful...since we give our congregations the opportunity to act for justice based on our faith, to give voice to our values in the public sector, and to represent those who need our support. In this complex interdependent world which is modern life, having an impact on public sector decisions is critical.

In all these activities, we are led by the Rev. Craig Hirshberg, our executive director, with creative and inspired leadership. Laurice Grae-Hauck, our administrator/communications director, is helping us to more effectively organize and communicate our message; and Diane Connell is working with us to create a real development plan to support growth.

I would also like to express my thanks to the members of both the both the c 3 and c 4 Boards, as we have together worked on envisioning and developing the next phase of the Legislative Ministry. Each of you has brought unique skills and strengths to our work. It has been great working with each of you. I would also like to acknowledge Toby Tyler, Nick Lewis, and Missy Staples who are leaving the Board this year but will continue to be significant contributors to our work.

Looking forward to working with you all on the next phase of our advocacy activities.

Frances Prestianni

ISSUES UPDATES – ACTION AGENDAS

At the annual meeting, the UULMNJ Task Forces reviewed the past year and developed action agendas.

Economic Justice Task Force

Two speakers presented information - Gary Nissenbaum spoke about the activities with Fair Share Housing; and Brian Pen talked about recovery from foreclosure. Coming out of those discussions, the following action items were agreed upon:

- Unite with Fair Share Housing Center (FSHC) to educate our own municipalities about the impending deadlines to deliver their Affordable Housing Plans to their respective County Courts.
 - Training is available from (FSHC) at locations around the State and online (information from Fair Share Housing Center).
 - If enough UULMNJ members volunteer to join the effort, FSHC will arrange a special training session for us (Gary Nissenbaum facilitated this agreement).
- Advocate for passage of all the Foreclosure-related bills, but especially the Land Banking Bill A-4248, which permits municipality to hold foreclosed properties after the proper foreclosure proceedings. This allows communities to rebuild an inclusive community with input from respected community planning principals.
- Continue advocating for the Paid Sick Leave bill (A-2354/S-785)

For more information, contact Task Force Chair, Lorraine Wearley at lorrainewearley@gmail.com

Criminal Justice Reform/End the New Jim Crow Task Force

Alexander Shalom of the NJ-ACLU reviewed the range of criminal justice reform legislative and legal issues in New Jersey. “Drug laws” and the racial disproportion of arrests, convictions and incarceration in New Jersey are among the worst in the nation. Current activity is focused on a number of more active bills that can continue to make meaningful changes in the NJ criminal justice system.

- *Isolated Confinement Restriction Act* sharply limits use of present torturous solitary confinement; prohibits use for juveniles and mentally ill.
- *‘Presumptive Parole’ Bill* requires parole release of non-violent offenders at earliest eligible parole date; opens long term parole blockage and can measurably reduce NJ incarceration numbers.
- *Drug Abuse Treatment Bills:* A package of 21 bills directed at improving aspects of drug rehab and treatment is a positive step compared to criminalization. The Task Force supports many of these including the recent advance of the MAT/Drug Court Bill permitting use of medically assisted treatment in prison and official programs.

The Task Force supports and joins in stimulating advocacy, educational and protest programs in Congregations and for community outreach for criminal justice reform, an end to police and vigilante violence against people of color, and an end to the new Jim Crow.

For more information, contact Tack Force Chair Al Stawsky at Alynways@gmail.com.

Health Care/Women’s Reproductive Justice Task Force

Donna Dees-Thomases spoke about domestic violence at the Task Force meeting. The Health Care Task Force will be focusing on the following issues for the 2015-2016 year:

- Medicaid
 - The availability of reproductive healthcare for Medicaid patients.
 - The availability of doctors, hospitals and other healthcare providers for Medicaid patients.

- The healthcare of Domestic Violence victims
- Funding for family planning and women’s health in the New Jersey State Budget.

For more information, contact Task Force Chair Carolyn Baldachinni at cal6balda@yahoo.com.

Immigration Task Force

The guest at the annual meeting of the Immigration Task Force was Johanna Calle, Executive Director of a recently-established coalition of agencies called the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice, or NJAIJ. Our group is one of about 22 members of NJAIJ. Ms. Calle presented a wide-ranging report on the work of NJAIJ. Based on that discussion, task force members agreed to the following plans for our next period of work:

- Active consideration by individual UU congregations about their own membership in NJAIJ, which costs only \$100 per year and demonstrates the continued attention of our congregations to the goal of immigrant justice in New Jersey.
- Current attention on municipal and county-level policy-making, since both national and state-level policies are largely blocked.
- Examples of local policies include resolutions against local law police cooperation with ICE to hold detainees upon request, vigorous enforcement of wage theft ordinances through a mechanism to revoke business licenses of those convicted of wage theft, and enactment of local identification cards that would provide documents -- though unofficial -- for undocumented persons who are challenged by businesses or law enforcement.

For more information, contact Task Force Chair Ted Fetter at fetter4@verizon.net.

Environmental Task Force

Lyle Rawlings, president of the Mid-Atlantic Solar Energy Industries, spoke to the Task Force providing evidence of the options for sustainable energy. The Task Force will focus on supporting legislation which establishes targets for sustainable energy in New Jersey (S 2444). This legislation was recently released by the Senate Environment and Energy Committee so this is the time for asking for legislative support, writing letters to the editor and working on passage of municipal resolutions of support.

For more information, contact Task Force Chair Bill Potter at potterrex@cs.com.

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. Please contact Rev. Craig, UULMNJ President Frances Prestianni (fpresianni@gmail.com), or your congregational liaison to let us know how you would like to get involved.

YUUR VOICE VIDEOS AVAILABLE

A reminder that UULMNJ’s Educational Video Program “*YUUR Voice*” is available to be shown in your congregations. Five programs are available on the UULMNJ YouTube channel:

- Economic Justice – Affordable Housing
- Climate Change
- The New Jim Crow
- Immigration Detention
- Faces of the Undocumented

Each program also has a study guide. <http://uulmnj.org/education-resources/>

BRING UULMNJ INTO YOUR CONGREGATION

The Board is extending our outreach into congregations through our Congregational Relations Committee (Elaine Nigam, Chair) and Development Committee. Our goal is to reach as many congregations as possible with one of several programs that are designed to provide information about UULMNJ goals and achievements and to give the opportunity for more involvement. There are several options for these congregational programs:

- Justice Served: Review of UULMNJ goals, organization, accomplishments, opportunities to be involved; has been presented in Montclair and Morristown. Elaine Nigam made informal visits to the Bordentown and South Jersey Shore congregations.
- Informal Sunday Service: UULMNJ Board members present the service based on Justice Served Model. Nick Lewis and Frances Prestianni have presented services in Wayne and Hunterdon.
- Sunday Service: Executive Director, Rev. Craig Hirshberg leads the Sunday service; followed by a program focused on UULMNJ. During the last several months, Rev. Hirshberg has led services for the Ridgewood and Summit congregations.
- Video Program: Presentation of one of the new UULM social justice videos at a congregation with discussion led by UULMNJ or congregation member.
- Board Meeting: Board members present an overview of UULMNJ at a Congregation’s Board Meeting.

If you would like to learn more about the Legislative Ministry and would like to schedule an event in your congregation, contact Frances Prestianni at fpresianni@gmail.com.

OUR DENOMINATION

From the UUA

General Assembly: June 24 – 28 in Portland, Oregon: This year’s General Assembly theme is *Building a New Way*. For more information, including “virtual GA”, see <http://www.uua.org/ga>.

For your summer reading: UUA’s list of recommended books on race, class, and multicultural concerns <http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/discuss/57776.shtml>

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Myanmar: UUSC is monitoring the plight of stateless Rohingya migrants stranded at sea in Southeast Asia and is deeply saddened to see the Myanmar government’s continued failure to acknowledge discrimination against this ethnic Muslim minority in Rakhine State. UUSC has been working in Myanmar since 2002. Stay tuned for more updates on UUSC’s work in Myanmar.

<http://www.uusc.org/updates/migrants-at-sea-off-coast-of-myanmar>

Rights Now – UUSC Newsletter – Winter/Spring 2015

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/254112390/Rights-Now-Summer-2015>

Choose Compassionate Consumption

UUSC defends living wages, fair trade, and workers’ right to organize — and you are essential to these efforts. <http://www.uusc.org/campaigns/choose-compassionate-consumption>

UU-United Nations Office

What is a UU-UNO Envoy?

An Envoy acts to represents 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.

<http://www.uua.org/international/un/envoys>

NY Metro District: www.uumetrony.org

Joseph Priestley District: www.jpduua.org

Central East Regional Group: www.cerguua.org/

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>)!



**UULMNJ Executive Director's Annual Report
April 18, 2015**

UULMNJ has had an exciting and challenging year as it tries to respond to the emerging issues of the day within the context of a politically slow legislature. Many of the issues important to UULMNJ have not moved quickly through the legislative process. However, there are some very important initiatives UULMNJ has taken.

In light of the police killings across the country, the UULMNJ board has issued a statement regarding race and racism. UULMNJ is committing to greater understanding of race and its role in every issue the organization addresses. The full implications of this action are only beginning to be discussed. A small group is being formed to explore how we can best help our congregations build greater awareness and help to build the Beloved community.

After considerable study, the Ending Jim Crow Task Force has called for the taxation and regulation of Marijuana. The position paper is in this year's Annual Meeting materials along with other educational materials. This is by no means an endorsement of marijuana use. It is a call for justice and compassion. The detrimental impact of current laws concerning minor drug violations is harmful. The resulting mass incarceration is ruining the potential productivity of young lives, particularly people of color. UULMNJ is encouraging educational discussions within each congregation about this important issue.

Other issues that UULMNJ has focused on over the past year include:

- Earned Paid Sick Days
- Foreclosure Legislation
- Bail Reform
- Opportunity to Compete Act
- Parole Reform Legislation
- Fracking Waste Ban Veto Override
- Anti-poverty legislation in coalition with the NJ Anti-Poverty Network
- COAH Advocacy
- Intrastate Prison / Detainee Phone Rate Regulation
- Continuing Plaintiff in Church/State separation case against Dept. of Education
- Legal Advocacy Project Initiatives (LAP) (see separate report).

In addition, UULMNJ has done the following:

- Successfully advocated for the release of the Affordable Housing Trust funds.
- Promoted "Do Not Stand Idly By" program encouraging local municipalities to purchase police weapons from manufacturer who produce smart guns and promote high safety standards.
- Participated in crafting of New Jersey's environmental and sustainability legislation through Sen. Smith's initiative.
- Helped organize New Jersey UU's participation in the Peoples Climate March in New York with approximately 300 NJ UU participants.
- Organized the State Advocacy Network (SANS) Workshops at the UUA General Assembly and upcoming Metro District Conference.
- Represent UULMNJ on several NJ and national coalitions.

UULMNJ's influence and effectiveness in social justice advocacy is growing as indicated by recognition of New Jersey decision-makers:

- UULMNJ was asked by the Governor's office to attend the signing of Bail Reform legislation.
- UULMNJ served on the NJ Senate Environment Stakeholders Task Force.
- UULMNJ received several complementary letters from NJ Legislators thanking UULMNJ for specific issue advocacy work.
- Three UULMNJ leaders have been tapped by the Center for American Progress to participate in their national training programs on reproductive justice and domestic violence and gun violence and young adult advocacy.

Organizationally, UULMNJ has grown in complexity as well: This past year, UULMNJ has accomplished the following:

- Hosted two UUA College of Social Justices summer interns
- Developed five YUUR Voice TV half-hour issues programs on Immigration, mass incarceration, sustainability, and affordable housing. Shows appeared on Princeton TV and are available on the UULMNJ YouTube channel for congregational use.
- Began planning SALTA, a young adult advocacy training program
- Expanded the administrator position to half-time to provide more stability and accommodate the growing amount of administrative work.
- Expanded the Exec. Director position to 30 hours/week.
- Expanded Salsa electronic advocacy, data and donor programs and social media postings. Currently, UULMNJ has 940 Salsa (electronic advocacy) supporters. Thanks to the new UULMNJ administrator, the Facebook and twitter contacts are growing. This year UULMNJ added 250 Facebook followers, and 198 twitter followers. UULMNJ averages about 350 hits a week. Obviously, these numbers are not huge but they continue to grow.
- Participated in NJ Faith Leaders coalition in meetings with the Governor Christi, NJ Chief Justice Rabner, and US Senator Booker.
- Held an over-night board and leadership retreat for planning and reflection.
- Hired a Development Director, Diane Connell to implement the financial development plan.

In addition, UULMNJ held the first annual Muusic Festival, held at the Morristown Fellowship, attracting 206 people. 98 performers from 6 congregations raised their voices and our spirits as they sang to benefit UULMNJ. The event included the inaugural performance of the NJ All State UU Chorus. The event raised \$6000. Many thanks to Laurice Grae-Hauck for her vision and execution of the program and the choir directors and choirs from Lincroft, Summit, Morristown, Somerset Hills, Montclair and Paramus for such an uplifting day.

Obviously, this work is not possible to accomplish by three part-time staff. The volunteer effort of the UULMNJ board, task forces, liaisons, volunteers and congregations compounds our efforts and makes UULMNJ so productive and efficient. As executive director, I would like to thank the staff, board and all of our volunteers for everything they do. The strength of UULMNJ rests with its collective congregational support.

As Unitarian Universalists we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, we believe in justice and we believe in the democratic process. Often one's dignity and worth is brought into questions by social structures that create inequality and injustice. Therefore, we are called to act. And when we act together, we strengthen our power and influence to create a more just and compassionate world.

Respectively Submitted,
Rev. Craig Hirshberg, Executive Director
 April 18, 2015



**UULMNJ Joint Presidents' Annual Report
2014-2015**

The Legislative Ministry Boards continue to work on building the infrastructure to support our growing advocacy role in addition to making decisions on the policy directions that that organization will take. We began the year with a Board Retreat including Task Force Chairs that focused on strategic planning for the organization. That was an energizing experience for us as we thought about how we wanted the organization to look in five years. We examined our strengths and capacities always orienting to our prime objective: being the voice of UU values in public sector decision-making. This planning process recognized our major achievements in addition to our needs.

We envisioned an organization that expands our role in congregations working in cooperation with other faith-based groups, in the community and in the public policy sector. As a result of this experience we focused in on four strategic goals to guide the boards' efforts during the year. This is a review of those goals and the ways that they have guided our efforts this year and will guide the organization's growth in subsequent years.

Goal: Prepare a development plan to allow us to fully realize an organization with more staff support.

This goal was the focus on the Development Committee chaired by Board Member Nick Lewis. Developing our financial base would allow us to build an expanded role for the Legislative Ministry including increasing current staff hours and to more fully support Task Force activities. We made some steps in that direction this year, with increasing the Executive Director's hours to 30 hours per week and the administrator's hours to 20 hours per week. Our eventual goal of an enhanced UULMNJ role took a significant step forward with a donation dedicated to hiring a part time staff person who focused on development. That staff person, Diane Connell, was added in January and is working with the Board and the Development Committee to release a development plan in the fall which will involve all congregations.

The Development Committee also created a "Justice Is Served" model for presenting UULMNJ to congregations, focusing on our foundation in UU values, achievements, organization and how to be more involved. This led to several meetings in Morristown and Montclair. Those meetings were very successful in bringing the Legislative Ministry to individual congregations and building commitment to our programs. We also held a UU Music Festival which brought choirs from several congregations together to sing, celebrate and hear about the Legislative Ministry's work. This effort, organized by our administrator Laurice Grae-Hanuck, was very successful in fund raising and in expanding our visibility; we plan to make this an annual event.

Goal: Create more visible presence for the Legislative Ministry in congregations

The Congregational Relations Committee chaired by Elaine Nigam led this effort. Each congregation has a contact on the committee who is charged with providing support to that congregation. Building on a joint effort with the Development Committee, the Committee organized five ways to reach out to congregations: Executive Director Rev. Craig Hirshberg leading a Sunday service with a possible

meeting after the service with Board members; a service led by Board members; informal meetings in congregations using the “Justice Is Served” model; leading a discussion based on YUUR Voice in Trenton videos which focus on advocacy efforts; and presentations at Board Meetings. Outreach was done with several congregations, including South Jersey Shore, East Brunswick, Ridgewood and Wayne. Other activities are planned for the Hunterdon, Summit and Bordentown congregations within the next two months; and we are anxious to reach out to other congregations.

Goal: Work on improving visibility in the community

Board members Toby Tyler and Missy Stables developed this initiative with the Communications Committee. A major effort was made to redesign the web site to make it more compatible with small devices, to modernize the design and to make the web site easier to update. This work was accomplished with assistance of a consultant and there will be an official launch in the next month.

Goal: Identify a volunteer coordinator to involve more people in volunteer roles.

The Board has been involved in building a strong support system for the Legislative Ministry. But there was general recognition of the need to involve more volunteers who would bring increased energy and new skills. Board members Judy Strachan and Andrea Lerner led the successful effort to find a coordinator for volunteers, Bill Slezak.

All the board members of both the UU Legislative Ministry and the UU Legislative Ministry Public Policy Network have functioned to develop a vision for the Legislative Ministry and to develop the structure to support these activities. Members of both boards meet together monthly to hold strategic discussion and monitor progress towards our Legislative Ministry objectives as a whole. At the end of their joint meeting time, the Boards convene separately and hold their respective meetings to direct the two organizations and vote on relevant issues. Members of both Boards also serve as volunteers on our Board committees, Task Forces and as congregational liaisons. Our success in these efforts depends on their continued energy and dedication working in community with congregations.

Submitted by:

Frances Prestianni, President, UULMNJ Board of Trustees

Rev. Alison Miller, President, UULMNJ/PPN Board of Trustees