



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST LEGISLATIVE MINISTRY
OF NEW JERSEY

A voice for Justice, Equality and Compassion in New Jersey

SEPTEMBER 2012

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome Back,

I just learned that the Governor vetoed the Ban on Fracking waste, citing that it was unconstitutional under the commerce laws. To date, there are no guidelines for fracking waste, but what we do know is that it contains many more toxins than would normally be allowed by the EPA – except the fracking industry has gotten an exemption from EPA water standards. We also know that if the waste is not classified as toxic waste, it will be treated as normal wastewater, possibly dumping chemicals into the waterways and water tables. I happen to live in an area of New Jersey that still has well water. I have to test the well water regularly. Some fear that toxins left in the ground by industry generations ago can still be leaching into the water table. When will we learn, and when will we be able to foster a government that understands its need to protect its citizens?



What comes to mind, whether it be fracking waste, or a Citizens United decision, is that even though something is deemed legal or constitutional, it does not make it necessarily ethically or morally right. As Unitarian Universalists, we have a deep responsibility to be good stewards of the earth. We are compelled to act when we can, to protect this very important source of life.

We are also compelled to openly, courageously and with respect and compassion, raise the moral and ethical questions that are often overlooked when laws are made. This is the role of UULMNJ as representative of a faith community. And it is the role of every Unitarian Universalist in New Jersey. Everyone needs to express his/her voice. The more UU voices that are heard, the more power we have in addressing the legal, but not so ethical matters of state.

We will be discussing this and other matters in greater detail at our Fall Issues Conference on Saturday, October 20, in Ridgewood. Registration information is below. PLEASE take time from your busy schedule to join in the discussion. This is very important.

In faith,
Rev. Craig Hirshberg
Executive Director

PS. There is a new report documenting the wide range of costs imposed by of fracking that just came out. See www.uulmnj.org for details and a link to the report. And go to www.uulmnjppn.org for information on how you can help overturn the veto of the fracking waste ban.

UULMNJ FALL ISSUES WORKSHOP –OCTOBER 20, 2012

Including the presentation of the Spirit of Humanity Awards

**UULMNJ Annual Fall Issues Workshop
Saturday, October 20, 2012, 9am – 3pm
Unitarian Society of Ridgewood**

Registration is now open at
<https://www.formdesk.com/uiforms/UULMNJ>

Highlights of the event include

- Latest research on Poverty in New Jersey presented by Allan Lichtenstein of Legal Services of New Jersey
- Important Task Force meetings:
 - Immigration
 - Economic Justice
 - Environment
 - Health Care
 - Marriage Equality
- Help determine the issues on which UULMNJ will focus for 2012-2013
- Presentation of the Spirit of Humanity Awards honoring Melville D. Miller of Legal Services of New Jersey (www.lsnj.org), and Kevin Walsh of the Fair Share Housing Center (www.fairsharehousing.org) at a celebratory reception
- Dialogue with UULMNJ advocacy friends from around New Jersey

Please plan joining us for this event. You can help us publicize it by downloading a flyer at www.uulmnj.org to post in your congregation. We look forward to seeing you on October 20!

*And mark your calendars now for the **UULMNJ Annual Plenary** on Saturday, April 20, 2013 at the UU Church at Washington Crossing in Titusville. More details will follow in early 2013.*

UULMNJ “RESOURCE IN A BOX” COMING TO CONGREGATIONS

UULMNJ’s congregational liaisons serve a vital role in the communication between UULMNJ and our UU congregations. In response to requests from congregations, and with help from a grant from the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program’s Fund for Social Responsibility, we have put together the “UULMNJ in a Box” resource to enable congregational action teams to more easily and effectively communicate with the members of their congregation. The boxes are being distributed at liaison trainings. Two have been held to date, receiving high marks from the participants. Another date will be scheduled soon.

INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITY WITH UULMNJ

UULMNJ is seeking an intern to help task forces in their work and develop educational materials. If you know a college or law school student who might be interested, please have them contact Rev. Craig for details.

REV. CHARLES ORTMAN'S "MOVING ON... LESSONS FROM THE ROAD" PUBLISHED

Rev. Charles Ortman, of the UU Congregation at Montclair, writes that, "It has been a very, very long time in the making, but my book, "Moving on... Lessons from the Road," is finally available in both electronic reader and in paperback at Amazon.com. It is a collection of stories that came out of my 47 day bike ride across the country. I hope that if you order it and read it, you'll find something of your own stories in them and that you'll enjoy the excursion."

In response to reading a portion of the book, Publishing Agent John Monteleone wrote: "...The context is rich and the related thoughts of others transform the bike ride into a continuous journey of discovery. The treatment succeeds on two levels – an adventure story and an exploration of the abiding truths, large and small, that can guide us in meeting life's challenges, joys, sorrows, victories and defeats." He went on to say that this is a book that "would comfort, inspire and educate a wide spectrum of readers..." Search on Amazon under Rev. Charlie's name for more info on the book and/or to order it.

Faith is a commitment to live as if certain things are true, and thereby help to make them so. Faith is a commitment to live as if life is a wondrous mystery, as if life is good, as if love is divine, as if we are responsible for the well-being of those around us.... Faith is a leap of the moral imagination that connects the world as it is to the world as it might become. - Galen Guengrich

ISSUES UPDATES

Economic Justice

Please contact Lorraine Wearley for more information and to get involved with the Economic Justice task force, lorrainewearley@gmail.com.

Environment

The Environment Task Force has an open position for their force chair. Please contact Rev. Craig if you are interested in this volunteer position.

Please see www.uulmnjppn.org for information on the recent veto of the fracking waste ban and efforts to override it.

From the NY Metro District:

The New York Metro District's Environmental Justice Council will host an Environmental Justice Tour of the Ironbound section of Newark, NJ on Saturday, October 13, from 10:30am to 1:30pm. The fee is \$25 for Council members and youth and \$35 for others. Registration is necessary, go to <http://www.uujusticeweb.org/environmental-justice-council.html>. For more information, contact the [Rev. Peggy Clarke \(pclarke@uuma.org\)](mailto:pclarke@uuma.org).

The Environmental Justice Council is designed to educate and empower congregations to address the critical issues of our day. Congregations that join the Council are welcome to send as many members to each meeting as desired and will have access to webinars and additional resources outside the Council meeting times. Member congregations are asked to contribute \$50 a year to

help cover costs. If you are interested, contact the Rev. Peggy Clarke or register through the UU Justice Web (www.uujusticeweb.org).

Health Care

The Health Care Task Force wants to make sure all people get healthcare that they need and deserve. They have been concentrating on two issues - Medicaid and the future of health insurance exchanges (the next step in the Affordable Health Care Act).

At its last conference call, the Health Care Task Force covered:

- The importance of publicizing their support for fair and consumer friendly Health Insurance Exchanges in New Jersey. For New Jersey to be eligible for federal funds to create the exchange, the Governor must inform the Federal Government that we plan to form our own exchanges by November 16, 2012. We discussed partnering with our coalition NJ For Health Care.
- A statement in support for Medicare and Medicaid, and to make a statement in opposition to any possible cuts or changes to these programs. This statement would be linked to an announced 10% reduction in Medicaid home health reimbursement from Horizon NJ Health, a reduction that would cut reimbursement rates from \$15.50 per hour to \$13.95 per hour beginning October 1. The home health reimbursement is for the elderly and disabled residents of New Jersey on Medicaid. See the article *Horizon NJ Health Slashes Medicaid Reimbursements for Home Healthcare; Agencies argue that 10 percent cut may ultimately affect the quality of care they can deliver to clients*:
<http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/12/0904/2312/>
- The group will also be looking at addressing *Reproductive Justice* issues.

The Health Care task force conference calls are every third Tuesday of the month, at 6:00pm and 7:30pm. Please contact Carolyn Baldacchini at cal6balda@yahoo.com for call-in details and/or to become involved with the Health Care Task Force.

From UUA:

The UUA has released a Congregational Resource Packet on Reproductive Justice. This packet includes small group ministry sessions, a faith development guide, a liturgical calendar, sample worship, a sermon archive, a list of 10 things for congregations to do, and other materials to help UU clergy members and individuals advocate for reproductive justice. For more information, and to sign up: <http://www.uua.org/reproductive/action/200096.shtml>

Immigration

Issues covered at a recent conference call included:

- Sending a note to the NJ Assembly committee on Education, commending them for passing A718, instructing the NJ Department of Education to remind local school boards to the requirement to enroll students regardless of immigrant status.
- Creating a small group to work on a strategy for creating legislative push on wage theft
- Surveying NJ UU congregations on what they have done over the past few years on immigration issues

- NJ has a detention visitation program, organized by First Friends/IRATE, in which many UUs participate; need to help publicize it and encourage NJ UUs to become visitors, and also to support the program financially. See: www.IRATEfirstfriends.org.

The group also discussed the need to ensure that all NJ UU congregations are aware of the UUA CS/AI process on “Immigration as a Moral Issue,” which will culminate in consideration of a Statement of Conscience at the 2013 General Assembly. Margaret White developed the following; please help by circulating in your congregation (or refer people to the UULMNJ website).

UUA CSAI (Congregational Study/Action Issue), 2010-2014 “Immigration as a Moral Issue”

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. The General Assembly held in Phoenix in 2012 was specifically focused on Immigration issues, and the staff Commission on Social Witness (CSW) organized and conducted workshops on the issue.

On November 15, 2012, the CSW will present 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.

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 about the CSAI process and timetable, go to www.uua.org/immigration/re/moral/172548.shtml.

Contact Ted Fetter, fetter4@verizon.net, for more info and to participate in the conference calls.

Marriage Equality Task Force

UULMNJ wants to overturn the veto on marriage equality in New Jersey. We need a strong task force to make this happen. We have a task force chair if it appears that there will be enough people willing to work with the group on this issue. If you would like to be part of the team, contact Rev. Craig at director@uulmnj.org ASAP.

From the UUA:

The *Welcoming Congregation Bulletin* (<http://www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/230747.shtml>) is a new monthly newsletter published by the Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Ministries.

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

The **UU Congregation of Princeton** is hosting a Welcoming Congregation Leadership Summit on September 29. All UU congregations are invited to join us in learning effective ways of engaging within our congregations, between congregations and collaborating in the larger political arena. For more information: <http://uumetrony.org/metronyminute/sep12/Princeton.pdf>

The **UU Church in Cherry Hill** is hosting the Joseph Priestley District's 2013 Worship Arts Festival on February 22-23, 2013. Peter Bowden, UU growth, outreach, and media consultant, will be the featured presenter. The annual event features a plenary session and workshops for anyone involved in the art of creating meaningful UU worship experiences. For more info: <http://uumetrony.org/metronyminute/sep12/WAF.pdf>

Skylands UU Fellowship participated in the Green Living Festival of Long Valley over the summer by hosting a booth describing its role in TerraCycle's recycling program for previously non-recyclable or hard-to-recycle waste, converting it into a wide variety of products and materials, and encouraging other groups and individuals to engage in the program that helps the environment. In addition, the Fellowship made available a stack of free "Pride Guides" to local LGBTQ-friendly resources, published annually by the Gay Activist Alliance of Morris County.

The Committees of the Social Responsibility Council at the **Unitarian Society of Ridgewood** are sponsoring a year-long study and action program on restoring the balance between capitalism and democracy in our society. The kick-off event on September 21 will feature a presentation on poverty in New Jersey by UULMNJ's Economic Justice Task Force and Allan Lichtenstein of the Poverty Research Institute, Legal Services of New Jersey.

The **UU Ocean County Congregation's** Legislative Ministry sponsored a program September 11 to commemorate 9/11 and offer an opportunity to study and discuss the Supreme Court decision, "Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission," stating that the most important right in a democracy is the right to vote and that vote needs to be based on information gathered and produced with transparent funding sources. The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of NJ's webinar was shown.

Cherish your doubts, for doubt is the attendant of truth. Doubt is the key to the door of knowledge; it is the servant of discovery. A belief which may not be questioned binds us to error, for there is incompleteness and imperfection in every belief. Doubt is the touchstone of truth; it is an acid which eats away the false. Let no one fear for the truth, that doubt may consume it; for doubt is the testing of belief. The truth stands boldly and unafraid; it is not shaken by the testing.
- Robert T. Weston

FROM OUR DENOMINATION

The District has launched a new **UU Justice Website** (<http://www.uujusticeweb.org/>) designed to educate, build community, connect faith to action, and inspire us to live UU Principles in the world. The site offers resources of all kinds, including "Your Voice" pages. There are also a

series of forums for congregational and District based work, designed to facilitate discussion about how we engage the community and each other.

Anti-Racism Cluster Groups are being formed in the District. If antiracism is a goal for your congregation, consider joining the Anti-Racism Cluster Group being formed in your area. Register for more information at the UU Justice Web.

The UUA Witness Ministries has a 2012-13 social justice calendar. Find worship resources, action campaigns, educational materials, more. (www.uua.org/justicecalendar/index.shtml)

The UUA has a YouTube channel, with new videos added frequently:
<http://www.youtube.com/user/UUAElectronicComm>.

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

UU Justice Action News – September 2012: Taking Love to the Polls & Our Communities + New Resources:
http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1272/t/0/blastContent.jsp?email_blast_KEY=1255154

Election Guidelines for Congregations: <http://tipsheet.blogs.uua.org/uncategorized/election-guidelines-for-congregations/>

NY Metro District: www.uumetronny.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.

Please forward this e-bulletin to others in your congregation who might be interested.
If you would prefer not to receive e-mail from us,
just let us know and we'll remove you from our e-mail list.