



UULMNJ BULLETIN SUMMER 2013

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear UULMNJ Friends,

The time is now! During the fall months, New Jersey will face several questions of justice in our state: Marriage Equality, Environmental Justice (Fracking) and Economic Justice (Minimum Wage Referendum). This will be a time for us to stand up and be counted; to educate others about the facts of injustice, to personally build support among all we know, and to boldly express our positions, with UU dignity and respect to those whose support we need. If ever there was a time to live our faith, it is now.



Here is an update on critical issues:

- *Marriage Equality*: As the courts prepare to hear arguments about the inequality of marriage vs. civil unions, a new statewide coalition of major financial supporters, New Jersey United for Marriage (www.njum.org), has been launched. It incorporates Garden State Equality, ACLU, Lambda Legal and other supporters. NJUM is launching a full-blown campaign to overturn the governor's veto by the end of this legislative session. Field organizers are being hired and a broad plan for legislative visits, phone banks, and other actions are being planned. UULMNJ is in contact with NJUM's faith organizer to identify our key role. Our own Marriage Equality Task Force is busy scheduling legislative visits in key districts and planning ways to engage our congregations even more. This is just beginning. More details will be available within the next few weeks.
- *Minimum Wage Referendum*: Raising the minimum wage and tying it to the cost of living index will be on the ballot this November. UULMNJ is promoting voter registration and voter turnout. Since we are a 501c3, we do not endorse positions on electoral processes. However, we do want to emphasize that this year we have very important election decisions. We will be electing a Senator, legislators and deciding about a referendum. For more information about voter registration and upcoming election deadlines, see your congregation liaison.
- *Fracking*: Fracking waste is entering New Jersey. The Environmental Task Force has made the overturning of the Governor's ban on fracking by the end of the legislative year a priority. More information will be forthcoming from the task force.
- *Gun Violence Prevention*: Over the summer, UULMNJ has participated in several news conferences bringing attention to the gun violence prevention bills waiting to be signed by the Governor.

As we head toward the start of the new congregational year, the expectations and demands of congregational life will begin to expand. Yet, we must remember that there are bigger issues at stake, bigger needs that go beyond our walls, bigger demands that call our faith to respond. New Jersey needs to hear our UU voice over the next few months. Lend your voice, your help, and any resources you can spare to this important effort. Call me if you would like to help.

The time is now!

Faithfully,
Rev. Craig Hirshberg
Executive Director

P.S. On August 24 there will be a March in Washington DC to mark the 50th Anniversary of the 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom, and the day Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr delivered his historic "I Have A Dream" Speech. There will be a bus leaving from Newton, with arrangements being made for a Morristown pick-up. Seating is limited. Contact Jo Sippie-Gora asap at josippie@optonline.net. Connect with UUs – info from Standing on the Side of Love can be found at <http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/march-on-washington/>.

SAVE THE DATES

Mark your calendars now and please plan on joining us:

- Issues Workshop - October 19, 2013
Hosted by the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield
More details and registration information coming soon
- Annual Plenary - April 5, 2014
Hosted by the UU Congregation of Princeton

BOARDS ELECT OFFICERS AT JULY MEETING

At their first meetings of the new church year, the UULMNJ and UULMNJ Public Policy Network boards elected officers for each organization.

For the UULMNJ Board:

President – Frances Prestianni (Princeton)

Vice President – Nick Lewis (Montclair)

Secretary – Gail Marsh Saxer (Ocean Co)

Treasurer – Judy Strachan (Montclair)

Board members: Doug Cocuzza (Sussex Co), Adam Green (Ridgewood), Rev. Virginia Jarochar-Ernst (Monmouth Co), Lorraine (Missy) Staples (Somerset Hills)

For the UULMNJ PPN Board:

President – Rev. Alison Miller (Morristown)

Vice President – Toby Tyler (Morristown)

Secretary – Rev. Kathleen Green (Ridgewood)

Treasurer – Judy Strachan (Montclair)

Board members: Carolyn Baldacchini (Summit), Nick Lewis (Montclair), Frances Prestianni (Princeton)

Thank you to all for your willingness to serve.

UULMNJ JOINS IN SUIT FOR SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

UULMNJ, along with the ACLU and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, officially filed a suit against the NJ Department of Education and the State Treasurer. The suit stems from the proposed use of state bond money raised for higher education being awarded to private religious institutions, in direct conflict with the NJ Constitution. “As a member of the clergy, I recognize the important responsibility that faith groups have in training their next generation of leaders,” said the Rev. Craig Hirshberg, executive director of UULMNJ. “However, their religious studies should not be funded by taxpayers. When the government financially supports religious groups, it provides privileges to particular religions over others and diverts designated public funds away from programs that should benefit all citizens.”

Rev. Craig participated in a session with media representatives following the announcement of the suit. A hearing for an injunction to prevent the awarding of the funds was not necessary. The state agreed not to distribute the funds in question until a court decision is made.
<http://www.aclu-nj.org/news/2013/06/24/civil-liberties-groups-challenge-state-funding>

GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGHLIGHTS FOR UULMNJ

Rev. Craig was at General Assembly, at which Statewide Advocacy Networks played a prominent role. She reported that highlights for SANs and UULMNJ included:

- The first State Advocacy Networks (SANs) Booth, including six training sessions open to other SANs across the country. There are now 19 states organizing and the UUA has incorporated SANs into a staff portfolio (Susan Leslie).
- A SANs video was produced for GA and five UULMNJ representatives went up on stage during plenary (Mia Morse, Ted Fetter, Virginia Jarocha-Ernst, Kathleen and Mitch Green and myself) to promote and demonstrate the growing movement. Both the video and booth were made possible by the annual contributions state groups make to a general fund.
- She offered a coaching session for new SANs on how to involve local congregations in state advocacy work.

FROM UUSC: SOCIAL JUSTICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR CONGREGATION

UUSC is committed to providing engaging opportunities for your congregation and its members to advance justice in the year ahead. If you are already starting to look at your congregation’s activities for August and early September, here are some helpful resources and upcoming events:

2013–2014 Calendar of Social Justice Opportunities: UUSC’s action calendar, running through July 2014, explains the how individuals and congregations can connect with UUSC’s justice work at different points in the year. We will continue to update these resources as new opportunities become available. When you begin planning for the upcoming months, please take

a look at the calendar (www.uusc.org/calendar) to see how your congregation can participate in UUSC's work.

Water Communion: Does your congregation practice water communion or another water ritual in August or September? If so, this is a chance to raise awareness that access to safe, clean, affordable water for basic needs is a human right — and that many people around the world are being denied that right.

Guest at Your Table: Watch for a Guest at Your Table planning packet coming by mail in early September — expect exciting congregational program updates as well as a special anniversary incentive as Guest at Your Table approaches its 40th year. There will also be a new online fundraising feature for participants in Guest at Your Table.

Read more at: http://actnow.uusc.org/site/MessageViewer?dlv_id=16021&em_id=13121.0

ISSUES UPDATE – GET INVOLVED

Thanks to the efforts of many people, especially Nick Lewis (Maplewood) and Frances Prestianni (Princeton), UULMNJ now has attractive and professional-looking issues folders and materials to use when visiting legislators or networking with coalition allies. Talk to Rev. Craig to get packets for your visits. Samples of the materials are posted on the UULMNJ website.

Economic Justice

Raise the Minimum Wage: The Committee had considered a “Get Out the Vote” Campaign in conjunction with the League of Women Voters (LWV). After a careful review by members of the board with legal counsel, it was decided that EJTF/UULMNJ would not organize a “Get Out the Vote” campaign on its own. The Task Force will encourage individual UU's to join campaigns organized by other organizations, such as LWV, community groups, labor unions or political parties of the individual's choice. In addition, UULMNJ will give UUs information about the upcoming elections and encourage each person to vote:

- Three upcoming elections are on August 13 (Primary to select the candidates to replace the late Senator Frank Lautenberg); October 16 (Election Day for U.S. Senator only); and November 5 (General Election Day, where the Governor, State Senate and State Assembly will be selected and the minimum wage referendum will be either approved or voted down).
- Voter registration forms are available at <http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information-voter-registration-forms.html>. You must submit your registration form 21 days before the election.
- Anyone can vote by mail. You just need to file a Vote By Mail Application, which must be received by your County Clerk at least seven (7) days before the election. Forms can be obtained from your Municipal Clerk or printed out from the State website: <http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information-vote-by-mail.html>.

UULMNJ is mentioned in the UU World article, "UUA and UUSC call for increase in minimum wage" in a section on state involvement.

http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/289122.shtml?utm_source=n

Sandy Relief: HUD's response to the Administration's Action Plan resulted in more relief for renters/affordable housing, than originally requested; however, not nearly enough. Rev. Craig is signing onto the Housing and Community Development Network of NJ's joint letter on behalf of UULMNJ. Letters to the Governor and our US Representatives are also needed. Read our Policy Brief for Sandy Relief on our website.

Court Decisions on COAH: On July 10, the NJ Supreme Court ruled that Gov. Christie does not have the power to eliminate independent agencies. The Court found that the statute that created COAH "requires bipartisan control of the Council, with no more than six of its twelve members from the same political party." <http://fairsharehousing.org/blog/entry/nj-supreme-court-decision-rejects-christies-attempt-to-abolish-coah/>

Environment

A meeting was recently held at the Princeton UU Church regarding the proposed formation of a coalition to push for renewable energy in New Jersey. Led by Bill Potter, a new member at Princeton, who was once the Public Advocate for the State of NJ, the group is seeking supporting organizations that would contact legislators to sponsor a bill that would require that the state achieve 80% Renewable Electricity by 2050, with an intermediate requirement of 30% Renewable Electricity by 2025. The coalition would also seek a requirement that the total electric usage in New Jersey be reduced by 20% by 2025 relative to 2012 usage, and be reduced by 30% by 2050 relative to 2012 usage.

The task force believes that this is an exciting prospect that would provide a vehicle for advocating for Environmental Justice as was a key goal of the 2013 UU General Assembly. The task force will continue to gather more information about this effort.

Immigration

Delegates at the 2013 General Assembly in Louisville, KY, accepted Immigration as a Moral Issue as a Statement of Conscience. Read more and find resources at <http://www.uua.org/immigration/re/moral/>.

The task force is continuing to follow key pieces of legislation, including wage theft, in-state tuition for dreamers, drivers licenses for undocumented immigrants; they are also looking into telephone rates at detention centers. Also, all are encouraged to contact our newly appointed senator, Senator Chiesa at 202/224-3224. His email address is Senator_Chiesa@Chiesa.senate.gov. His mailing address is Senator Jeffrey S. Chiesa, Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. The message is simple -- support S. 744 for fair and comprehensive immigration reform.

Volunteer opportunity: First Friends (<http://www.irate-firstfriends.org/>) relies on volunteers to meet immigrant detainee requests for visits. Because of continued increases in the number of detainees at the four facilities for which they provide services they are reaching out for additional volunteers. As a First Friend volunteer you would have an opportunity to do great good for our very vulnerable neighbors. Volunteers are needed for the following facilities: Bergen County Jail in Hackensack, Delaney Hall in Newark, Elizabeth Detention Center, and Hudson County

Correctional Center in Kearney. If you and/or your congregation has an interest in outreach ministry, please call Rosa Santana at 908-965-0455 or e-mail firstfriends2@juno.com

Health Care

The task force continues to work on its priority issues – to support, publicize and explain the next steps of the Affordable Care Act in New Jersey, and to work on reinstating state budget money for women’s health and family planning centers.

Rev. Kathleen Green (Ridgewood) has agreed to be a point person for UULMNJ reproductive justice, as a subcommittee of the health care task force. Let us know if you are interested in working on this.

Marriage Equality

Parts of the Defense of Marriage Act were found to be unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court, awarding full and equal federal benefits to same sex couple and heterosexual couples. As a result:

- This automatically puts into question the equality of civil unions in New Jersey. A previous NJ court case ruled that civil unions and marriages must have equal benefits under the law.
- This is now being tested in the NJ courts. The hearing will be Aug. 15.

State-wide organizing has begun. A new expanded coalition is being formed to provide both financial and organizational leadership for an all out campaign to overturn the Governor’s veto before the end of this legislative session (Jan. 2014). UULMNJ is exploring ways UU’s can best participate and expand the role of UU congregations statewide. More information will be available in September.



UULMNJ members show their support for marriage equality at a rally in Trenton after DOMA repeal.

Get Involved

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

- **Economic Justice:** Lorraine Wearley, lorrynewearley@gmail.com
- **Environment:** Rohn Hein, rohn@netzero.net
- **Health Care:** Carolyn Baldacchini, cal6balda@yahoo.com, and Reproductive Justice: Rev. Kathleen Green, usr.minister@verizon.net
- **Immigration:** Ted Fetter, fetter4@verizon.net
- **Marriage Equality Task Force:** Marty Rothfelder, mcrothfelder@verizon.net
- **Gun Violence Prevention:** Diane Finn finnflynn@verizon.net or Lew Maltby lmaltby@workrights.org
- See www.uulmnj.org for more task force/issue information.

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

What social justice initiatives and activities is your congregation planning for the new church year? Let us know so that we can share them here. And maybe you'll find something you want to bring to your congregation.

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.

[Note: In earlier versions of our e-bulletin, an incorrect link was posted to an earlier page. If you tried that and noticed that it wasn't current, please try again!]

OUR DENOMINATION

UUA President's Statement on the Zimmerman Verdict

UUA President Peter Morales issued a statement in response to the Zimmerman verdict, saying, "I remember the words of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.".... We must respond to our society's violence, hatred, and fear with compassion and justice."

(www.uua.org/news/pressroom/pressreleases/289040.shtml)

Rev. Morales refers to an Action of Immediate Witness, passed at General Assembly, condemning racist mistreatment of young people of color by police, noting that the AIW stems from the work of author Michelle Alexander whose book, *The New Jim Crow*, describes the institutional racism behind the mass incarceration of people of color.

- Action of Immediate Witness - www.uua.org/statements/statements/288864.shtml
- *The New Jim Crow* - www.uua.org/re/multigenerational/read/index.shtml
- Resources from UUA's Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministries - www.uua.org/multiculturalism/208702.shtml
- Standing on the Side of Live post by Taquiena Boston, "Grieving for Trayvon All Over Again" - www.standingonthesideoflove.org/blog/grieving-for-trayvon-all-over-again

The **Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office (UU-UNO) Climate Change Initiative** is announcing the development of Climate Action Teams (CATs). CATs are groups dedicated to raising awareness about and acting against climate change within your congregation and community. They are encouraging congregations to form a team and join a growing UU network to help tackle one of the most pressing issues of our time. CATs will stay connected to each other through online tools and periodic phone conferences. For further information about CATs and how you can incorporate one into your congregation, first steps, registration materials, and more: <http://uusj.net/wp/2013/07/12/uu-united-nations-office-is-developing-climate-action-teams/>

UU Ministry for Earth <http://uuministryforearth.org/> and their most recent newsletter http://uuministryforearth.org/files/UUMFE_Newsletter_v12n3.pdf

NY Metro District: www.uumetrony.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 like to be added to our mailing list, please drop us an email at director@uulmnj.org.