



**UULMNJ BULLETIN
NOVEMBER 2013**

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Another year of social justice education and advocacy is coming to an end. Last week I was talking with Rohn Hein, expressing my frustration with the fracking issue, wondering if it was even possible to turn around the full press efforts of the energy industry and government policy. And he said to me, “And marriage equality in New Jersey isn’t going to happen.” That little comeuppance caused me to pause. I said, “Thank you.”



That simple statement reminded me that social change doesn’t originate from strategy or constituent letters. Change happens because of hope. For thirty years, the hope of marriage equality was kept alive in our hearts, constantly compelling us to move forward, step by step, regardless of how pessimistic the outlook of current conditions seemed. And it is no different with any other social justice concern. As we move forward working toward a more equitable world, it is an unbridled hope in the future that motivates us, that helps us take those big courageous steps, and more often those little and sometimes tedious steps into the future. The cornerstone of who we are is our hope for a better quality of life for those who are struggling in New Jersey and our belief in its realization.

One definition of faith is committing one’s heart fully to something and then moving forward with a confidence in tomorrow, knowing that life will evolve as it needs to evolve. The driving force of UULMNJ’s work is this kind of faith - faith that moves us forward in hope, one step at a time, one conversation at time as we gather into a movement for justice.

This holiday season, I invite you to stop and take pause, reflecting on the faith and hope in your heart. Each day is a new day in the justice journey. Faith and hope in tomorrow is what changes our lives and our world. May you be blessed with having them in your life.

Best wishes for the holiday season from all of us at UULMNJ.

Faithfully,
Rev. Craig Hirshberg
Executive Director

SAVE THE DATE – UULMNJ ANNUAL MEETING – APRIL 5, 2014 – PRINCETON

UULMNJ RECEIVES GRANT FROM UU FUNDING PROGRAM

UULMNJ was awarded a grant of \$14,300 and a challenge grant of \$4,200 by the UU Funding Program. This will allow us to increase the hours for Tara Wildhagen, our administrative assistant, provide an internship stipend and some help in paying for Salsa, our email advocacy software package. This is the third year that the UUFPP has provided support for UULMNJ, support which has been invaluable in growing our organization. Read a recent UUWorld article about the UUFPP, *Funding Program Helps UUs' Social Justice Dreams Come True*, at <http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/290136.shtml>

JAMES DEBOER, FAITH ORGANIZER, CONTINUES WORK WITH UULMNJ

Thanks to your generosity, we were able to raise over \$9,000 and hire a Faith Organizer to work with other organizations and our congregations to override the Governor's veto of marriage equality legislation. No one we spoke to could think of another organization like ours taking such a dramatic step and we couldn't have done it without your help.

We hired James deBoer with the funds raised. James worked for four weeks on marriage equality before the campaign closed when the Governor decided to drop his appeal of the judicial opinion holding that denying marriage to same sex couples is unconstitutional.

With the additional marriage equality funds raised, the board decided that it made sense to keep James on half-time to work on lame duck session legislation, in particular in-state tuition for undocumented students and Sandy recovery legislation. He is also making the rounds of visiting ministers and assisting the development of policy statements for reproductive justice. In addition we are looking at using James' expertise to help us be better prepared to respond to similar issues of justice that will certainly arise in the future. This might include supporting Task Forces with development of policy statements and other materials, establishing rapid response teams, creating training programs and devising systems that will make our Congregational partners more effective.

UPCOMING PROJECTS AND EVENTS

UULMNJ Video Project: Rev. Craig is planning a UULMNJ video project. We have a producer in place but are looking for those with knowledge of video to help guide this effort. Please let us know if you would like to help out.

GA Workshop: Rev. Craig recently completed a proposal to provide a SANs Advocacy workshop with Mass Action and other SANs at this year's General Assembly. The workshop will include a play designed for worship, a panel about SANs and some training in "How To's." UULMNJ was recently featured as the "Best Practices" presenter on the SANs national conference call, highlighting how we created an additional staff position for marriage equality.

BANNER MISSING IN ACTION

Yes, the UULMNJ "Standing On the Side of Love" eight foot, bright yellow banner is missing. It is hard to miss as it is accompanied by an eight foot wooden pole. The banner was last seen in

the vicinity of the East Brunswick Society. If you have any knowledge of its whereabouts, please contact director@uulmnj.org ASAP. The banner represents our UU identity in our work for justice and plays an important role in our public witness work. Thanks.

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.

ISSUES UPDATE – GET INVOLVED

It has been quite a fall for the UU Legislative Ministry of New Jersey. Within a three-week period two of our major issues came to fruition. We have won marriage equality throughout the state and the NJ minimum wage referendum raising the minimum wage and tying it to a cost of living index won at the polls. UULMNJ would like to thank everyone who helped make these two major wins possible. Your contributions, your letters, your phone calls, your legislative visits and your witnessing helped us win. Justice has tipped its hat toward New Jersey.

The UULMNJ Agenda for 2013-14

The UULMNJ Issues Workshop was held on October 19 in Plainfield. UULMNJ's Task Forces met and selected the following issues as priorities for 2013-14.

Environment Task Force

Will focus on the following:

- Legislation that is being proposed by NJ FREE that seeks the adoption of a requirement for 80% renewable electricity by 2050, with an intermediate requirement of 30% renewable electricity by 2025. It also seeks 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. Read more about NJ Free in this article: <http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/13/10/15/opinion-add-some-real-muscle-to-stronger-than-the-storm-catchphrase/>, and see the task force's position paper on the UULMNJ website.

Chair: Rohn Hein rohn@netzero.net

Immigration Task Force

Will focus on the following areas for the coming six or eight months:

- Federal comprehensive immigration reform (more information, along with a sample letter can be found at <http://www.uulmnjppn.org/index.php/issues/current-priority-issues/immigration-policy-reform/115-immigration-reform-contact-your-congressional-reps>).
- Tuition equity in New Jersey (proposed legislation is being addressed during the lame duck session); see <http://www.uulmnjppn.org/index.php/component/content/article/12-news-events/uulmnjppn-news-and-events/117-new-jersey-dream-act-take-action-now> for more on what you can do to further this effort; pay special attention to the tuition equality resource packet for congregations, which includes sample letters, email and phone scripts, Sunday service bulletin inserts, and a policy brief.
- Revived letter campaign to the Obama Administration to enforce existing policies.

Chair: Ted Fetter fetter4@verizon.net

Economic Justice Task Force

Will focus on the following three areas:

- Getting out the vote in support of minimum wage, which has already been accomplished.
- Affordable Housing and housing recovery from Hurricane Sandy, especially targeting the great need to replace rental and affordable housing in the storm areas.
- Research: Mass Incarceration as an Economic Justice Issue. Best selling books, such as *The New Jim Crow* and *Orange is the New Black*, have revealed the huge impact that incarceration of family member has on the financial and emotional stability of a family. The research will include: statistics, policy brief, fact sheets, identifying partner organizations and proposed legislation.

Chair: Lorraine Wearley lorrainewearley@gmail.com

Gun Violence Protection Task Force

Worked tirelessly on NJ Gun Violence Protection legislation in New Jersey this past year. This year it will focus on the following:

- Persuading four New Jersey congressmen to support the Thompson-King bill, HR 1565, that requires universal background checks while also protecting gun owners' rights.
- Mobilize UU congregations, gun violence prevention activists, inter-faith clergy councils, medical personnel, students and other constituency groups to create a groundswell of public pressure to convince these four congressmen to co-sponsor HR 1565.

Chairs: Diane Finn finnflynn@verizon.net and Lew Maltby

Health Care and Reproductive Justice

Will focus on the following areas:

- Documenting the rights of a Medicaid patient, rights including the right to cease a pregnancy and purchase birth control (this sub task force is currently formulating).
- Taken on the responsibility to draft responses to inaccurate news stories, on-line posts and comments that inaccurately portray the progression of the Affordable Care Act.

Chairs: Carolyn Baldicchini (Affordable Care) cal6balda@yahoo.com and Rev. Kathleen Green (Reproductive Justice) usr.minister@verizon.net

Marriage Equality Task Force

- We thank Chair Marty Rothfelder and the marriage equality task force for a job well done! Congratulations!

If you are interested serving on a task force, contact the task force chair at the address above or contact 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 if you would like to consider helping us out with these important functions.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE IN NEW JERSEY

The following information is from the Human Rights Campaign to answer frequently asked questions about marriage equality New Jersey.

How do I obtain a marriage license in New Jersey?

Marriage licenses were made available to same-sex couples as of October 21st. The procedures are the same for all couples. You will need to complete an application for a marriage license and sign the application at the Local Registrar's office in the municipality where at least one of you lives. Complete details about obtaining a marriage license are available at www.state.nj.us/health/vital/marriage_apply.shtml.

What rights and responsibilities do same-sex couples who legally marry receive in New Jersey?

Same-sex spouses will receive the same rights and responsibilities afforded to different-sex spouses under New Jersey law, including health care decision-making, property and inheritance rights.

What do I have to do if I'm a New Jersey resident who is legally married in another jurisdiction?

You do not have to get married in New Jersey or otherwise register your marriage in New Jersey. New Jersey law now recognizes as valid lawful marriages between same-sex couples from other jurisdictions.

What does the law mean if I have entered into a civil union with my partner in New Jersey?

Civil Unions will not automatically convert to marriages. You can choose to remain in a civil union and not marry, but you and your partner will not be eligible to receive the rights, benefits, and responsibilities conferred by the federal government to married couples. To receive the federal rights, benefits, and responsibilities of marriage, you must apply for and receive a marriage license and thereafter engage in a marriage ceremony in order to receive a marriage certificate.

For answers to more frequently asked questions about same-sex marriage in New Jersey, check out the guide prepared by the state Department of Health, www.state.nj.us/health/vital/faq.shtml#ssm.

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!

OUR DENOMINATION

From the UUA

Six Issues Proposed for New Study/Action Issue

Congregational Study/Action Issues (CSAIs) are issues selected by UU member congregations for four years of study, reflection and action. Congregations have the opportunity to participate in the following social witness processes:

- Vote in the Congregational Poll: Congregations select up to five proposed CSAIs. The proposed issues: 1) Empowerment - Age and Ability Reconsidered; 2) Ending the War on Terror; 3) Escalating Inequality; 4) Gun Violence: A Public Health Issue; 5) Renewing and Securing Our American Democracy; 6) Just Peace for Israel and Palestine. The delegates at GA 2014 will choose one to be the 2014-2018 CSAI. Voting closes February 3, 2014.
- Submit comments on the Draft CSAI “Reproductive Justice: Expanding Our Social Justice Calling.” Comment period closes March 1st, 2014.

See <http://www.uua.org/statements/current/index.shtml> for more information.

The third annual **Thirty Days of Love sponsored by Standing on the Side of Love** will run from January 18 through February 16, 2014. Thirty Days of Love is a period of intentional action, service, education, and reflection. This year’s campaign will focus on four themes: Living the Dream, Sharing our Stories, Building Bridges of Love, and Pause, Reflect, Celebrate! On February 16, congregations are invited to end the Thirty Days of Love with *Share the Love Sunday*, a chance for your congregation to help support social justice work.
<http://standingonthesideoflove.org/blog/first-look-the-third-annual-thirty-days-of-love/>

UU Justice Action News – November 2013

http://org.salsalabs.com/o/1272/t/0/blastContent.jsp?email_blast_KEY=1286299

From the UU Service Committee: Choose Compassionate Consumption

Today's global supply chain of goods and services is complex and far from transparent. Yet as consumers, we each have the power to educate ourselves and decide which businesses to support, which goods to buy. Each time you purchase a good or patronize a service, you have a choice - and that choice makes a statement. Together with UUSC, you can act on a deep commitment to workers' rights, ethical eating, and building a just economy by choosing to spend wisely, in alignment with your values. Together we can choose compassionate consumption.

And consider the UUSC store if you are shopping this holiday season and support UUSC’s work to advance human rights. <http://www.uusc.org/ccx>

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.