



## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST LEGISLATIVE MINISTRY OF NEW JERSEY

*A voice for Justice, Equality and Compassion in New Jersey*

JULY 2012

### FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This June marked my first complete cycle of the legislative year serving as your executive director. And this is my second year witnessing the New Jersey budget process through which all state initiatives must pass. In some ways, it can be very disheartening to watch. UULMNJ worked very hard to promote marriage equality, affordable housing, environmental justice and consumer-oriented healthcare exchanges through the legislature, only to have them knocked down by the veto pen of the governor. There were some quasi wins. In marriage equality, the legislative votes were historic. We are still awaiting the governor's decision on the fracking waste ban. Overall, however, many of our efforts were not endorsed by the powers that be. This political process can be discouraging.



*And yet, I cannot feel discouraged.* Please understand, I would love to win one. Winning is good. But that is not what UULMNJ's work is all about. We are called, you and I, to be a voice for justice when justice is being undermined by our institutions. We are called to be a voice for those who no longer believe their voice will ever be heard in the political arena. We are called to be stewards of our land. We are called to speak up when the health of adults and children in our state is threatened by inadequate housing, health care and nutrition. How can we feel discouraged when there is so much still to do? As I focus toward the future rather than the past, I, for one am motivated by tremendous social and economic needs before us.

As a UULMNJ faith community, we represent Unitarian Universalist values. As our tagline says – *a voice for justice, equality and compassion in New Jersey*. I have come to learn that it isn't just being a voice. We are a presence. Our presence is what makes us effective and different from many other voices. As Unitarian Universalists, we show up. Whether it is in body or petition, we show up. And we persevere, whether we win or lose, whether we are strong or afraid, we continue on because in the grand scheme of the universe, this is what we are called to do. This is our place.

I have been so proud to represent all of you in Trenton this year. To hear comments like "Oh, we've heard a lot from the Unitarians," to see you come out to testify at hearings or demonstrate support at rallies, to see the petitions amass, shows that we are present, taking our place as ongoing advocates for a fair and just world. We make a difference.

So, with tremendous gratitude, I say thank you to every congregation, minister, board member, liaison, testifier, rally goer, petition signer, and member who has made this work in New Jersey possible.

In faith,  
*Rev. Craig Hirshberg*  
*Executive Director*

Below is an Invocation given at a local political gathering:

Spirit of life. God of many names and understandings. Be with us this day as we gather once again.

For a brief moment, let us take a brake from the fundraising and the speeches, to reconnect to the purpose of our endeavors - to be a voice of and for people of New Jersey.

For a moment, let us take a break from the campaigns, to remind ourselves of the public service to which we dedicate ourselves.

For a moment, let us take a break from budgets, to remind ourselves of those who need the support of a compassionate State.

For a moment, let us take a break from the lobbying, as we dedicate ourselves to the discernment of truth.

In this moment, let us be renewed. May our work for justice, equality and compassion be the source of our renewal. May the spirit of humanity be our guiding light as we dedicate ourselves to a greater good.

In the name of all that is holy, Blessed be and Amen

*- Rev. Craig Hirshberg*

### **SAVE THE DATES – UPCOMING EVENTS**

#### **UULMNJ Board Retreat**

Saturday, Aug. 25, 2012

#### **UULMNJ Annual Fall Issues Workshop**

Saturday, October 20, 2012

Unitarian Society of Ridgewood

Get up to date on issues being addressed by our task forces and participate in strategizing our congregational and state-wide efforts. Watch for more details and registration information coming soon.

#### **UULMNJ Liaison Training**

UULMNJ's congregational liaisons serve a vital role in the communication between UULMNJ and our UU congregations. Three training sessions are planned for liaisons:

- August 23 in East Brunswick
- September 8 in Morristown
- September 15 in Lincroft

Each session is the same, we ask that liaisons pick one to attend. If a liaison is unable to attend, please consider sending another representative from your congregation. Congregational resource boxes will be distributed at the sessions. Please keep an eye out for further details.

### **UULMNJ Annual Plenary**

Saturday, April 20, 2013  
UU Church at Washington Crossing

Join us for the annual meeting of our members. Keynote speakers, task force updates and more. Mark you calendars now. More details will follow.

### **STATEWIDE ADVOCACY NETWORKS OF INCREASING IMPORTANCE**

General Assembly was a tremendous event this year, especially for State Advocacy Networks (SANs) - <http://uustatenetworks.org/>. With the UUA's regionalization plan, state organizing groups are becoming the connecting group between the regional organizations and local congregations concerning social justice.

UULMNJ is one of twelve state legislative ministries, and is beginning to be recognized as a leader, along with the more established groups in California and Massachusetts. Rev. Craig was asked to serve on the national steering committee for the SANs organization.

### **REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE SELECTED AS CSAI AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Every two years, the UUA General Assembly selects a new Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI) for four years of focused attention by congregations and Association staff. This year the General Assembly considered five issues for selection. One of the options was proposed by the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood -- *Reproductive Justice: Expanding our Social Justice Calling*.

After the votes were counted, Reproductive Justice was selected as the CSAI. The Reproductive Justice framework includes preserving the legal "right" to choice, but also focuses on ensuring that individuals and communities have the economic and social means to actually access the full range of reproductive healthcare options.

Mandy Restivo and Carol Loscalzo, co-chairs of the Reproductive Justice Committee of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, spearheaded the effort to bring Reproductive Justice to the forefront of UUs' social justice work.

Reproductive Justice: Expanding Our Social Justice Calling:

<http://www.uua.org/statements/current/189638.shtml>

UUA: Reproductive Justice: <http://www.uua.org/reproductive/index.shtml>

UULMNJ will begin evaluating how we can best address this issue in New Jersey. If you are interested in helping in this effort please email Rev. Craig Hirshberg at [director@uulmnj.org](mailto:director@uulmnj.org).

## **RIDING FOR JUSTICE – SEEDS PLANTED AT JUSTICE GA CALLING TO BE WATERED**

*The following was recently issued through Standing on the Side of Love:*

“The seeds we planted together at the Justice General Assembly are calling to be watered.

Some of the local partners in Phoenix and others are preparing to risk everything to move this country forward. On July 28th, undocumented parents, workers, and students are confronting their own fears so that the world will recognize their humanity.

Through something that has often moved history forward—bold, peaceful civil disobedience—they will load onto a bus and embark on a journey from one end of the country to the other. As they travel state by state on a No Papers No Fear Ride for Justice, these individuals will come out as undocumented and unafraid, and they will work with immigrant communities throughout the Southwest and Southeast to build barrio defense on their way to the Democratic National Convention this fall.

Please join us in supporting these brave individuals who are risking their very freedom. ....There are no more sidelines in the immigration debate. The participants in the No Papers No Fear Ride for Justice are calling on us to do our all to turn the tide with them.”

For more information on supporting the Ride for Justice:

<http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/blog/coming-out-to-face-arpaiio-riding-for-justice/>

*"I believe Unitarian Universalists are called to radically embrace this world, in all its complexity and messiness, in all of its joy, sorrow, hate, love, birth, and death. The Reproductive Justice CSAI offers UU communities a powerful opportunity to engage in those tender and arduous tasks of living rightly with one another, the kinds of tasks through which our hearts and souls are reborn into the knowing of this world as paradise." – Rev. Rebecca Parker*

## **ISSUES UPDATES**

### **Economic Justice**

The EJTF wrote letters, made calls and visits to their legislators in support of the following legislation:

- S1566/A2168: NJ Residential Foreclosure Act, which would facilitate the conversion of foreclosed homes into affordable housing. This passed both the Assembly and Senate before the end of the session, but was vetoed by the Governor.
- S3/A2162: Increases minimum wage to \$8.50. Passed the Assembly on 5/24. Was received in the Senate and referred to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee on 5/31, but was not acted upon in the Senate before close of session
- S2011/A2950: Extends time on use of Affordable Housing Trust Funds in municipalities was passed by both the Assembly and Senate before close of session, but was vetoed by the Governor.

NJ Budget: An alternate to the Governor's budget, which modestly increases some aspects of the Social Safety net and proposed waiting on the Tax Cuts until the State meets the Governor's revenue projections, was passed by the legislature. However, the Governor used his line-item-veto authority to delete these measures.

Please contact Lorraine Wearley for more information and to get involved with the Economic Justice task force, [lorrainewearley@gmail.com](mailto:lorrainewearley@gmail.com).

## Environment

The Fracking Waste Ban took center stage. We worked closely with Food and Water Watch, NJ Environmental Federation and Environment NJ to broaden awareness about fracking waste being brought into New Jersey for treatment. About thirty UU's attended the June 14 rally day, including ten ministers. Rev. Craig, along with others, testified at the Senate hearing. The bill was passed by both houses and is awaiting the governor's signature.

A theater action is being planned at Drumthwacket in Princeton to encourage the governor to sign this legislation on Tuesday, July 24, at 6:30pm. (Please plan to park on Independence Dr.)

All are welcome to participate in the task force conference calls on the fourth Monday of the month. For more information, please contact Chuck O'Neil, [chuckconeil@gmail.com](mailto:chuckconeil@gmail.com).

## 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).

- *Health Insurance Exchanges*: The states must create health insurance exchanges. If they don't, the federal government will come in and do so. The health insurance industry has been very forceful in lobbying to create exchanges that are beneficial to them. The New Jersey Assembly and Senate passed strong consumer-oriented legislation that was consumer friendly but was vetoed by the governor.
- *Medicaid expansion*: The federal government would pay 100% of the cost for the first two years, and 90% per year thereafter. 1.3 million people in New Jersey would be insured as a result. The governor has until November to decide if New Jersey will participate and has decided to defer his decision until after the elections.
- 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](mailto:cal6balda@yahoo.com) for call-in details and/or to become involved with the Health Care Task Force.

## **Immigration**

As you know, Immigration was the major focus of the recent Justice GA. The primary social witness event was a candlelight vigil the night of June 23 outside Maricopa County’s “Tent City” jail, where County Sheriff Joe Arpaio houses prisoners outdoors in tents.

In New Jersey, UULMNJ has thrown its support behind the Indonesian Christians who are being deported despite the threat of serious repercussions if they return to their native land.

Contact Ted Fetter, [fetter4@verizon.net](mailto:fetter4@verizon.net), for more info and to participate in the conference calls.

## **Marriage Equality Task Force**

Marriage Equality has been a galvanizing issue that generated a great deal of interest in UULMNJ, and it will continue to be that. UULMNJ has reconstituted the Marriage Equality Task Force. Seven people gathered at Summit on June 27 to plan legislative visit in key districts. A task force chair is being sought, as well as additional task force members. Please contact Rev. Craig to indicate your interest.

## **CONGREGATIONAL NEWS**

The **First Unitarian Society of Plainfield** adopted a resolution affirming their support of marriage equality by a unanimous vote of the congregation on June 10, 2012.

Citizens’ Climate Lobby (CCL - [www.citizensclimatelobby.org](http://www.citizensclimatelobby.org)) meets the first Saturday of each month at 12:45 at the **UU Congregation of Monmouth County**. A national educational phone call begins at 1pm. They encourage others to join them as they work on creating the political will to bring about a stable climate for our generation and those who follow.

The **Unitarian Society of Ridgewood**’s Social Responsibilities Council has chosen *Economic Justice* as its theme for their work for 2012 – 2013. They are planning a kick-off event on September 21 to explore issues and open the dialogue, with the assistance of UULMNJ’s Economic Justice Task Force.

The **Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Monmouth County**, led by Lois Blake, spent a day socializing and providing a cook-out at Tent City in Lakewood. Tent City started out in 2005 with a few homeless people trying to find shelter. It is now a makeshift village of homeless people who seek shelter in tents and makeshift housing, and now houses approximately 70 people. UUCMC has voted to make Tent City one of their plate recipients.

*"Unitarian Universalism offers us a faith that challenges our energy usage and confronts us with hunger and injustice around the world without giving inadequate simplistic answers. It offers the harder path of respect for all being and for the Earth, and calls us to be accountable for our actions. We are responsible for our own spirituality, our own salvation, and for doing all that we can to make the world better." - UU minister Rev. Bob Klein*

## **FROM OUR DENOMINATION**

June 2012 Multicultural Growth and Witness Newsletter:  
[http://www.uua.org/documents/idbm/120525\\_news.pdf](http://www.uua.org/documents/idbm/120525_news.pdf)

UU Justice Action News – June 2012:  
[http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1272/t/0/blastContent.jsp?email\\_blast\\_KEY=1247946](http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1272/t/0/blastContent.jsp?email_blast_KEY=1247946)

UUWorld General Assembly Coverage - <http://blogs.uuworld.org/ga/>

UUA President's Statement on Supreme Court's Health Care Decision -  
<http://www.uua.org/news/pressroom/pressreleases/208974.shtml>

Illuminations, the UUA's first app, is now available (at no charge) in the iTunes App Store. The version runs on iPhones, iPod Touch, and iPads. The Android version will be ready soon. Illuminations has over 350 Inspirational Words, a Chalice Lighter with several chalice options, and a Seven Principles Guide in English and Spanish, along with examples of the Principles in action. <http://www.uua.org/beliefs/illuminations/>

Upcoming workshops sponsored by the NY Metro District:

- Junior/Senior Our Whole Lives Training  
August 10-12, UU Congregation of Montclair (NJ)
- Size Transitions Workshop: October 13, UU Church in Cherry Hill, Cherry Hill NJ.  
For congregations in the Metro NY and Joseph Priestley districts.
- Stewardship Workshop with Wayne Clark  
October 27, Central Unitarian Church, Paramus NJ.

See <http://uumetry.org/events/events.htm> for details.

For upcoming events sponsored by the Joseph Priestley District: <http://www.jpduua.org/news>

**CERG:** The Central East Regional Group is a region made up of four districts (Joseph Priestley, Metro NY, St. Lawrence and Ohio-Meadville Districts) of the UUA who are working together to share staff and resources to better serve their congregations. This program is experimental and began with the approval of the four district boards in March of 2010. <http://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](mailto: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.