



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST LEGISLATIVE MINISTRY
OF NEW JERSEY

A voice for Justice, Equality and Compassion in New Jersey

MARCH 2012

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I must admit, I am a people person. Working on a state-wide level is filled with emails, phone calls, conference calls and a lot of electronic communication. Sometimes this work can be hard. Sometimes it can be discouraging. So one of the great joys of the job for me is when I have an opportunity to see the real live faces of UULMNJ. I love the synergy of when we all get together. An excitement and renewed commitment grows as the day goes on. Coming together raises our spirits and supports us in the work we do.



Where else can you find good people, current updates on issues, a TIMELY keynote address and an opportunity to plan a strategize about important New Jersey issues in one day?

So, not only am I encouraging you to attend our annual Plenary on April 14, I am pleading with you to do so. You never know when your encouraging word or insight can help one of our fellow travelers; or when given an opportunity to brainstorm together, what new creative endeavors will emerge. Yes, you are not only wanted, but needed at the UULMNJ Plenary on April 14. It just won't be the same without you! To sign up, see below.

I look forward to seeing you there.

*In faith,
Rev. Craig Hirshberg
Executive Director*

UULMNJ ANNUAL PLENARY – APRIL 14 – REGISTER TODAY!

Saturday, April 14 • 9:00am – 1:30pm
Hosted by the UU Congregation of Monmouth County in Lincroft, NJ.

Featuring a keynote address by Ingrid Reed: “How Does New Jersey Measure Up: *Citizens United* and the Fairness of Our Elections.” Ingrid Reed recently retired as a Policy Analyst and the Director of the New Jersey Project at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers, and is a member of the UU Princeton congregation.

At the conclusion of the plenary, please join us at a reception to socialize and raise funds for the UULMNJ PPN Legislative Intern Fund.

Register today at <https://www.formdesk.com/uiforms/UULMNJ>. Please see the flyer at the end of this newsletter for details.

TO ALL UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS INTERESTED IN REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, RIGHTS, AND JUSTICE

Carol Loscalzo, Mandy Restivo, and Rob Keithan have issued a call to all UUs interested in working for reproductive health, rights, and justice. Read the full text of their letter at: <http://www.uulmnj.org/component/content/article/2-uncategorised/111-to-all-uus-interested-in-reproductive-rights.html>

Unitarian Universalists are mobilizing to be a force for reproductive justice - and they are hoping you'll be part of it. According to the Guttmacher Institute, 92 anti-abortion measures were passed at the state level in 2011—nearly three times the previous record of 35 set in 2005!

The 2012 UUA General Assembly in Phoenix will select a new Congregational Study/Action Issues (CSAI) for 2012-2016. *Reproductive Justice*, proposed by Mandy Restivo and Carol Loscalzo, co-chairs of the Reproductive Justice Committee at the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, is one of five contenders. They are joined in this effort by the third writer, Rev. Rob Keithan. Rob is currently a Consulting Minister at the Unitarian Society of Germantown in Philadelphia. In late February he also started a new job as Director of Public Policy at the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, a national interfaith organization dedicated to reproductive justice.

Mandy, Carol and Rob are planning a conference call on Thursday, April 5 at 4:00pm eastern time. The call in number is [\(218\) 632-0550](tel:2186320550), access code: 679579#. If you would like to join this effort, and/or RSVP for the April 5th call, please visit <http://bit.ly/GM7Em5> and share your contact information with them. And, of course, please pass this letter around to any other UUs who might be interested.

ISSUES UPDATES

Economic Justice

Members of the Economic Justice Task Force organized the presentation, “The Impact of *Citizens United* on the Democratic Process” in Princeton on March 15.

- What has been the impact of the Citizens United Supreme Court decision which allowed unlimited corporate and union spending for political advertising?
- What has evolved in the post-Watergate reforms such as disclosure, contribution limits, expenditure limits and public financing?
- What has been the impact of public financing and super PACs?
- Is there a way to pay for election campaigns which is not biased in favor of the wealthy?
- What is happening in NJ now? And how can each person become involved?

Questions such as these were addressed by Greg Nagy, a recognized expert in electoral financing, retired Legal Director of the NJ Election Law Enforcement Commission, and longtime UU, and Heather Taylor, the Citizens Campaign Communication Director, and coordinator of the NJ Online News Resource Group.

A two-part video and accompanying study guide is available for use in NJ UU congregations and individuals to support the understanding of these issues, and can be accessed at through the UULMNJ website, or via the following links:

Part 1 <http://youtu.be/dXnsfpDJc9w>

Part 2 http://youtu.be/4H_IpIobvd8

The task force supports increasing the minimum wage in New Jersey. They drafted a letter in support of A2162/S3 for use by New Jersey UUs.

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

Environment

The past month has been busy for the Environmental Justice Task Force. Their primary issue, getting New Jersey back into the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (www.rggi.org), was very much in the news, with recent committee hearings, a Lobby Day organized by a number of our allies, and the first auction, on March 14, at which our state did not have a seat. Rev. Craig and Sally Gellert attended the senate committee hearing on RGGI. It was very informative, with the speakers in favor outnumbering those in opposition

The task force conference call was devoted to a presentation by Transition Newton, which meets in a UU congregation in the northwest part of the state. Environmental justice demands that we consider the current and near-future concerns about the effects of climate change and how we are preparing - or failing to prepare - for rising water levels, more frequent and bigger storms (and longer droughts), and the overall effects of rising energy costs. The more self-sustainable we become now, the less the problem will be in the future, and lowering energy use now could actually mitigate the severity of the damage.

All are welcome to participate in the task force conference calls. For more information, please contact Chuck O’Neil, chuckconeil@gmail.com.

Health Care

The New Jersey Health Benefit Exchange Act has been passed by the Assembly and Senate. It is awaiting the Governor’s action, which he says he will withhold until the Supreme Court decision is issued in June.

The Health Care Task Force continues to work on the issue of health exchanges, and submitted testimony on Senate Bill 1319, “New Jersey Health Benefit Exchange Act”, which read, in part:

“The UULMNJ supports S1319 and offers the following comments. We support a Health Benefit Exchange, with strong consumer protections, that will bring affordable health insurance to the uninsured, self-employed and small business owners of New Jersey.

We support the inclusion of a Health Benefits Plan.

We support an Active Purchaser model. As Unitarian Universalists, we want to see the highest level of coverage that protects New Jersey residents.

We support only Health Benefit Plans that are certified by the Boards, Boards with a high representation of health care advocacy groups.

We believe that navigators, made up of advocates and advocate organizations, are important. We believe that a strong advocate presence on the Board of Directors is a democratic solution to representing patient and consumer rights. We would like to see two or more advocates on the board

The UULMNJ would like to see any and all communications be at a 6th grade reading level.

We believe in transparency and truth in advertising. We would like to see the term “provider” be defined as a unique person in a unique location.”

UULMNJ continues to work with New Jersey for Health Care Coalition (<http://njforhealthcare.org/nj.html>) on this issue.

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.

Immigration

March was a month of discussion and planning. No very significant state-level legislation is on the table so far this session, though there are one or two bills pending that we're watching to see if we can help move them to a hearing.

A very interesting federal situation has arisen in New Jersey. A group of Indonesian Christians who are undocumented in our state has come under the protection the Reformed Church of Highland Park, and an interfaith group is supporting them and this congregation. The group has been here for 15 or 20 years. One member of our East Brunswick congregation has become involved in the interfaith group, and our Task Force is assisting. A simple and straightforward federal bill (HR 3590) has been introduced to give these undocumented immigrants another chance to seek asylum for persecution due to their religion in Indonesia, and now has a Republican co-sponsor, Rep. Chris Smith, which certainly helps its chance in the House of Representatives. One of the undocumented Indonesians has been given sanctuary at the Reformed Church congregation because ICE notified him suddenly that he was going to be deported. Our group is monitoring this situation, and Task Force members have been urged to contact ICE and our two New Jersey Senators.

Immigration continues to be a very active topic in quite a few of our congregations -- Ridgewood, Montclair, Paramus, Plainfield, Princeton, and no doubt others as well. The Task

Force is presenting a workshop at the upcoming Metro New York District Annual Meeting on Friday evening, May 4, thanks to the organizing skills of Margaret White.

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

“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 wellbeing 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

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

The Rev. Judy Tomlinson, Associate Minister at the **UU Congregation at Montclair** and President of the Montclair Clergy Association, and the Rev. Charles Ortman, Senior Minister at Montclair, were among the clergy who spoke at a recent Montclair Township Council meeting calling on the council to provide assistance for homeless individuals. “We want you to know that we, as houses of worship, are doing what we can. But we can't do it alone. We need you to recognize these citizens of Montclair and to partner with us to meet the most basic of human needs,” said Rev. Tomlinson.

The **Lakeland UU Fellowship** took part in the No More Fukushimas Peace Walk. A group of Japanese Buddhists, Fukushima eye witnesses, and U.S. citizens walked over 200 miles, from Oyster Creek, to Indian Point, to Vermont Yankee to bring awareness to the risks nuclear power poses to human beings, property, and all life on Earth. On March 9, the Fellowship hosted a pot luck, informational guest speaker, and music.

The **UU Church in Cherry Hill** writes, “We've made a major step toward a sustainable future by installing 438 solar panels on our grounds and buildings. Our solar energy installation is now complete and is expected to reduce the church's electric bill by 95%.”

The **Morristown Unitarian Fellowship**'s five-year strategic plan called upon the Social Justice Committee to create a “signature project” each year with clearly defined goals with specific volunteer opportunities to meet these goals. The 2011-2012 Signature Project is “Alleviating Hunger & Homelessness.” They report in their March newsletter that 241 volunteers have worked 600+ hours and raised over \$32,700 through a variety of activities.

The **Central Unitarian Church**'s Outreach Auction raised \$36,500 for seven charities: Bergen County Sanctuary Committee, Center for Food Action, Family Promise of Bergen County, Habitat for Humanity of Bergen County, Holley Childcare & Development Center, Outreach Angels, and Bergen Volunteer Medical Initiative.

“No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There's too much work to do.”

- Dorothy Day (1897-1980), journalist, activist, and founder of the Catholic Worker movement

FROM OUR DENOMINATION

NY Metro District Annual Meeting: May 4 – 5: <http://www.uumetrony.org/am12/index.htm>

Joseph Priestley District Assembly: April 13 – 15: <http://www.jpduua.org/>. Keynote speaker is UUA President, Rev. Peter Morales.

March 2012 Multicultural Growth and Witness Newsletter:
http://www.uua.org/documents/idbm/120227_news.pdf

UU Justice Action News – March 2012:
http://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/1272/t/0/blastContent.jsp?email_blast_KEY=1239916

Congregational Study/Action Issue Study Guide: Immigration as a Moral Issue:
<http://www.uua.org/immigration/re/moral/guide/index.shtml>

The UUA Office of Growth Strategies (<http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/office/>) has created a blog, **Growing Unitarian Universalism**, which it will use to share ideas and strategies for growing congregations. The blog will share research, resources, articulate strategies, identify good practices, present guest commentaries, and invite comments from congregational leaders.

Blue Boat (<http://blueboat.blogs.uua.org/>), the blog of **Youth and Young Adult Ministries** within the UUA, is God Bless the Whole World (<http://blueboat.blogs.uua.org/young-adults/tools-for-personal-and-social-transformation/>), a free online collection of videos, audio files, articles, and courses on social justice, spiritual activism, and environmentalism, which are useful in starting discussions not only among youth and young adult groups, but in other groups as well.

The UUA has joined with dozens of other prominent religious organizations to unveil for congressional consideration a “**Faithful Budget**” proposal. The Priorities for a Faithful Budget is a set of comprehensive and compassionate budget principles that will protect the common good, value each individual, and help lift the burden on those living in poverty.
<http://www.uua.org/news/pressroom/pressreleases/198661.shtml>

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.



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ANNUAL MEETING 2012
Saturday, April 14, 9:00am – 3:00pm

Hosted by the UU Congregation of Monmouth County
1475 West Front Street, Lincroft NJ
(see www.uucmc.org for directions)

Featuring a keynote address by Ingrid Reed:

“How Does New Jersey Measure Up: *Citizens United* and the Fairness of Our Elections”

Ingrid Reed recently retired as a Policy Analyst and the Director of the New Jersey Project at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers, and is a member of the UU Princeton congregation. The New Jersey Project is an initiative designed to reinforce and expand the contributions of Rutgers’ Eagleton Institute of Politics to the governance and politics of New Jersey.

Please join us at the 2012 UULMNJ annual meeting:

- UUs from all over New Jersey will be gathering to discuss past and future actions on key issues.
- Delegates from Affiliated Congregations will be voting on the new budget and members of the Board of Trustees.
- A great opportunity to meet in person with justice leaders from other congregations.

Check-in starts at 9:00am with coffee and bagels; the meeting will begin promptly at 9:30am.

There will be a working lunch provided. We rely on your donations to cover the cost of food and materials for this event.

At the conclusion of the plenary, please join us at a reception to socialize and raise funds for the UULMNJ PPN Legislative Intern Fund.

REGISTER NOW!

Register online at <https://www.formdesk.com/uufoms/UULMNJ>

or

Contact us at 609-672-7331 or workshop@uulmnj.org

For updates and more information about UULMNJ, please visit www.uulmnj.org.