

# "Circles of Reflection: Engaging Women in Justice Work"

Thursday, June 21, 10:30am- 11:45am Room 227 AB

Sponsored by Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, Unitarian Universalist Association  
and Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network

Engage women and girls with social justice issues as spiritual practice using Small Group Ministry. This includes brief presentation and experience of a social justice in Small Group Ministry session. This resource packet includes material for the presentations and session plans for use in ongoing Social Justice Work.

**Presenters:** Biographic and contact information in on page 2.

*Rev. Marti Keller*, President, UU Women's Federation

*Jessica Halperin*, Women's Issues Program Associate, UUA

*Rev. Helen Zidowecki*, President, UU Small Group Ministry Network

## Workshop Schedule

1. Introduction -- *Marti Keller*

\*Setting the scope of the session

\*Announcing the UU Women's Federation grants focusing on immigrant rights and multi-culturalism, as well as how participants can obtain funding in future years.

2. Social Justice Issues with Women-- *Jessica Halperin*

3. Small Group Ministry -- *Helen Zidowecki*

\*Introduction to Small Group Ministry

\*Experience a Session. Form groups of 5-8. Each group will use a session from the packet to use for a half-hour session.

4. Discuss the experience and the importance of engaging in Social Justice work – *Marti Keller*

The Social Justice Work Process and Small Group Ministry Background in this packet are addressed more fully in *Social Justice Work: Preparation, Action, Reflection Through Small Group Ministry*, UU Small Group Ministry Network, June 2012. This publication, which also includes 34 Social Justice Work session plans, is available at GA or from the Network. See Helen Zidowecki for a flier and to purchase (CD \$20/\$15 for Network members. No Handling Cost at GA.)

The UU Small Group Ministry Network also invites congregations and writers to submit session plans for the Network website, sent to [office@smallgroupministry.net](mailto:office@smallgroupministry.net). These session plans may be shared with UUWF and UUA.

## Biographic and Contact information for Presenters

*Rev. Marti Keller* is the President of the UU Women's Federation, whose mission it is to further justice and equity for women and girls and promote their spiritual growth. She is the associate minister for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Atlanta. She has been both a parish and community minister in the Mid-South for the past 14 years. Prior to ordination, she worked as a reporter and editor of daily, weekly and monthly publications, focusing on cultural and lifestyle issues. She was a director of public affairs and government relations for Planned Parenthood in California for more than a decade, and executive director of two non-profit social change organizations focusing on women and families. She was also the first policy director for the Georgia Urban-Rural Summit, a progressive grassroots coalition. Her work in small groups includes creating programs in her congregations and serving on the UU Small Group Ministry Board Network, with special interest in furthering our justice efforts. She may be reached at [mkeller@uuca.org](mailto:mkeller@uuca.org).

*Jessica Halperin* is the UUWF Clara Barton Intern at the Unitarian Universalist Association. A member of the UUA's Multicultural Growth and Witness staff group, Jessica advocates on issues of reproductive justice and women in poverty and provides resources and opportunities for Unitarian Universalist congregations and leaders to do the same. Her background is in communications, having previously worked for the Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quaker) and other nonprofit organizations in the Washington, D.C., area. A native of Pittsburgh and a life-long Unitarian Universalist, Jessica is a member of the Universalist National Memorial Church and a 2008 graduate of Earlham College. Contact her at [jhalperin@uua.org](mailto:jhalperin@uua.org) or 202-393-2255 ext. 12.

*Rev. Helen Zidowecki* is a retired minister residing in Litchfield, Maine, and a member of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Augusta, ME. She has been the Religious Education/Program Consultant for the Northeast District, is involved in writing curriculum and is a member of UU CARDS (UU Curriculum and Resource Developers). She also has authored publications for the UU Small Group Ministry Network, and serves as President. She leads workshops for congregations and districts. She is on the board of the UU History and Heritage Society. These organizations have been developing resources for Social Justice Work. Contact: [hzmre@hzmre.com](mailto:hzmre@hzmre.com) or 207-582-5308.

## The Phases of Social Justice Work

*It is not enough, many human and civil rights activists have found, to boycott, march and protest. Without education beforehand and intentional reflection afterwards, social action efforts can be mechanical and soul-depleting. Rev. Marti Keller*

Social Justice work calls us to be intentional in our commitment to Social Justice, to *prepare* ourselves emotionally and spiritually, to deeply understand the spiritual implications and the outcomes of our *actions* for ourselves and those we would help, and to *reflect* on the action that we take, or do not take. This we do from faith grounded in Unitarian Universalism

### **Preparation for Social Justice Work:** *Awareness, Planning, Deciding on Action*

There are at least three areas of preparation:

1. Social Justice as an integral part of our Unitarian Universalist faith.
2. The importance of the Social Justice work to *you* and awareness.
3. Application of our preparation and personal engagement to specific Social Justice issues.

#### *Social Justice as an integral part of our Unitarian Universalist faith.*

As Unitarian Universalists, we are challenged to be change agents and to consider *when* to take action; *what* action to take, from a position of faith; *why* we need to be involved; and *how* our Unitarian Universalist connection influences our Social Justice work.

*Personal engagement with Social Justice Work.* Preparation includes conscious consideration of level of involvement. This will depend on personal commitment and the resources (people, time, energy, material items) available.

*Applying Social Justice work to specific issues.* It is important to apply the preparation related to our Unitarian Universalist faith and to our personal engagement when we consider specific topics. Preparation includes understanding the many facets of the issue, what can be done realistically, how we can be advocates and allies, and what is needed by partners.

#### **Action:** Engaging Self with Others in Social Justice Work.

Imminent action focuses on oneself and the action recipients. *Considering the envisioned and possible impact of actions makes us more aware of the intentionality of our Social Justice work.* Each of us is only part of the action. There also are those whom we are attempting to help, the *recipient of the action* and those who are on another side of the issue from our position. We need to be aware of and respect everyone involved as we take action.

*It is not the study, the learning about an issue, or defining the action to be taken that is the hardest part. Rather, it is understanding and knowing ourselves and how we can be at our human and spiritual best. And from that point, we take action.*

#### **Reflection:** Feeling the Impact of Action Taken.

Reflection includes the action and the impact on ourselves and on the recipients of our action. *It is the intentional engagement with the process of Social Justice work, the results, and the deeper engagement that allows discernment for ongoing involvement.*

## Background for Small Group Ministry

*Small Groups/Covenant Groups are a way for us to act more consciously, in tune with our values and with each other's support. We reflect on what we have done, integrate it with our values and our understanding of the world, and make that the basis of future action.*

Elizabeth Barrett/David Blough, First Unitarian Society, Madison, WI

Small Group Ministry or Covenant Group Ministry has become an integral part of Unitarian Universalist congregational life since it developed from evangelical roots in the late 1990's as a way of connecting people more deeply within our congregations.

The *Basic Elements of Small Group Ministry*, developed by the Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network, have evolved over the years as a result of interactions with numerous congregations. A more complete description of Small Group Ministry can be found at [www.smallgroupministry.net](http://www.smallgroupministry.net). We are using Small Group Ministry as a process for our Social Justice work. Notations that specifically apply to the workshop are underlined.

**Small Group Ministry** is intentional lay-led groups that deepen/expand ministry.

"*Small*" means a group with a *maximum* of 8-10 people. Groups of this size provide an opportunity to relate on a more intentional level.

"*Group*" is a gathering of individuals. Group indicates being in the presence of others that allows us to share and to deepen our own journey as we hear the sharing of others.

Our groups this morning will be 5-8 people each, formed with people near you.

"*Ministry*" is the process or act of caring or being present with another. This relates to the spiritual as well as the physical and emotional well-being of the group participants.

The **Power and Promise of Small Group Ministry** are Intimacy, Ultimacy

*Intimacy* is relationship, being present for each other, the willingness and ability to *listen* without comment or advice, to *learn* from others, and to *share* from the soul.

*Ultimacy* focuses on meaning and significance, rather than details, information or outcome. Social Justice issues are part of this exploration of topics of significance and meaning

**Agreements between groups and the congregation** that specifically apply to Social Justice work:

1. To abide by a set of relational ground rules, called a *covenant*. This includes ways to listen and be heard. It takes several sessions and for a group to develop a covenant. This morning, we are suggesting a covenant that covers key considerations.

*We value our time together and respect each of us here. We share and we are silent to allow the sharing of others. We speak from our hearts and for ourselves only, without needing to respond or give advice. Sharing is an opportunity rather than an obligation, and a gift to the group. We hold our sharings in confidence within our circle.*

2. To engage in *service* to the congregation and the larger world. This includes Social Justice work within and beyond the congregation. This morning we will be experiencing Small Group Ministry session plans can be used in bringing Social Justice into the congregational life.

Each meeting of the group is led by the *Session Facilitator* who guides the group through session, keeping the session moving, ensuring that all participants have opportunity to participate fully. The Facilitator is a group participant and can share. For this morning, each group is asked to quickly designate a Facilitator, preferably someone who has been involved in Small Group Ministry/Covenant Groups.

The *Session plan format* generally includes:

- An *opening* reading that introduces but does not guide the topic.
- A *check-in* when each person shares about how they are. This is a substantial part of the session and deeper than we will be going this morning. We are requesting that the check-in be no more than 10 minutes total. You may want to introduce yourself (name, congregation) and say a word about how you are at this moment.
- A time for the *focus* or theme of the meeting with sharing personal stories, guided by questions in the Session Plan, and learning from listening to others, rather than wanting to agree with a perspective. The focus is on going deeper ourselves with a topic, “from the heart”, rather than engaging in opinion or interpretation or response, “from the mind.” We appreciate that there will not be time to address all of the questions in the session plan.
- The *check-out* gives opportunity for each participant to say how the session was for her/him. For this workshop, we will ask generally how it went when we gather back into the total group. This is a personal reflection rather than a report,
- A *closing reading* that brings the time together to an end but is not a summary.

Each group will be given a session from the following:

<b>Reproductive Justice</b>	<b>Failure is Impossible</b>
1. What is Reproductive Justice? (p.7)	4. The Impact of Women (p.12)
2. Reproductive Justice: Choice and Loss (p.9)	5. Perceptions/Assumptions(p.13)
3. Reproductive Justice: Raising Children (p.10)	6. Involvement (p.14)

These session plans relate more to Preparation. Three additional session plans related to Action and Reflection are included in this packet for use beyond this workshop.

Small Group Ministry can be used for Social Justice work in several ways:

1. Social Justice session plans can be used as part of a small group ministry *program*.
2. As a *process*, Small group ministry can;
  - \***Offer open or short-term, specific sessions** to engage the congregation in Social Justice work, including **congregational gathering** in which groups of 5-10 participants (including facilitator) discuss the common session plan.
  - \*Be part of work **in connection with other congregations and community and interfaith group**, such as in “house meetings.”
  - \*Be **combined with educational, informational or planning activities** as part of a longer program. The Small Group Ministry session can be used for a designated time at the beginning or ending of an education/information meeting. It is critical that the Small Group Ministry session be separate from the other parts of the meeting, following the usual format and ways of interacting (personal from the heart versus opinions from the mind).

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS BY SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK PHASE

Small Group Ministry session plans can be related to the respective phases of Social Justice Work. Following are some questions that can be used with each phase. The session plans that we use during this workshop will reflect questions largely related to preparation. An additional sample of a session plan for action and one for reflection are included, but not used this morning.

Social Justice Work Phase	Standard questions for the section
<p><b>PREPARATION</b>  <i>Social Justice as a UU</i>            Social Justice as an integral part of our UU tradition</p> <p><i>Personal Preparation</i>            Deciding what involvement you will have in Social Justice work, based on interest and resources</p> <p><i>Specific Topics</i>            (The topics are endless!)</p>	<p>Why is Social Justice important to UUs, historically and theologically?            Why and how do UUs engage with Social Justice work?</p> <p>Share your personal connection with Social Justice work. Why should you be engaged personally? What does that commitment mean?            How do you prepare yourself for Social Justice work in general and related to specific issues?</p> <p>What does the issue being considered mean to you?            Reflect on the complexities of the specific issue.            What action is to be taken? To what end?            What is the expected impact of the outcomes?            Are the expected results of the action realistic and the limitations understood?</p>
<p><b>ACTION</b>            Preparing ourselves for and taking imminent action</p>	<p>What are you bringing to the action?            What will you receive from the action?            How do you view those you are intending to help?            Have we let go of preconceived ideas in order to be present during the action?            Are we prepared to listen and act from our heart?            Who are the people involved in the planned action: those we are assisting, those who we may find challenging?            Whatever your position, how do you connect with those who hold opposing views?</p>
<p><b>REFLECTION</b>            Defining the outcome of the action itself.            Acknowledging the impact of taking action and the outcome on us spiritually.            Identifying the impact on our taking further action.</p>	<p>What did engaging in Social Justice work feel like?            What were the moments of realization, of connection, the “aha” moments?            What did you learn about yourself and others by doing this Social Justice work?            What was revealed about what it means to be human, about good and evil, about what it means to be in solidarity with the oppressed?            What changes, if any, would you like to make in your own actions or habits as a result of doing the service?</p>

Small Group Ministry Session  
***What Is Reproductive Justice?***

By Jessica Halperin; for “Circles of Reflection Workshop,” General Assembly, June 21, 2012

**Opening Words:** “To Be Of Use” Marge Piercy, *Singing the Living Tradition* #567

I want to be with people who submerge  
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest  
and work in a row and pass the bags along,  
who stand in the line and haul in their places,  
who are not parlor generals and field deserters  
but move in a common rhythm  
when the food must come in or the fire be put  
out.

The work of the world is common as mud.  
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.  
But the thing worth doing well done  
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.  
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,  
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums  
but you know they were made to be used.  
The pitcher cries for water to carry  
and a person for work that is real.

**Check-in:** How are you today?

**Focus/Topic:** *What Is Reproductive Justice?*

As members of a religious tradition with a long and substantive history working for reproductive rights and a firm commitment to anti-racism, multiculturalism, and social justice, Unitarian Universalists are called to widen the current socio-political debate on “reproductive rights” to one on “reproductive justice.”

Within the framework of reproductive justice, the Unitarian Universalist Association works against the cultural, political, economic, and structural constraints that limit women's access to health care and full reproductive choice. Reproductive justice, a concept put forth by coalitions of women of color, promotes the right of all women to have children, not to have children, and to raise their children in safe and healthy environments. It does not isolate or pit important social issues against each other, rather it works to promote these rights across many areas, including comprehensive sex education, economic justice, ending violence against women, LGBT equality, and racial justice.

1. Why, as a faith community, do Unitarian Universalists work to promote reproductive rights and reproductive justice?
2. How has your life been impacted by the movements of reproductive rights and reproductive justice?
3. For many successful and productive years, Unitarian Universalists worked for reproductive rights. Since the mid-1990s, however, the framework of reproductive justice has been useful, particularly by groups of women of color, to frame a larger movement against reproductive oppression. How has your reproductive life been impacted by, or might yet be impacted by, your race, sexuality orientation, gender identity, and/or socio-economic background?

**Check-Out/Likes & Wishes:** How was the session for you?

**Closing Words:**

Earth mother, star mother,  
You who are called by  
a thousand names,  
May all remember  
we are cells in your body  
and dance together.  
You are the grain and the loaf  
that sustains us each day,  
And as you are patient  
with our struggles to learn  
So shall we be patient  
with ourselves and each other.  
We are radiant light  
and sacred dark – the balance –  
You are the embrace that heartens  
And the freedom beyond fear.  
Within you we are born,  
we grow, live, and die –  
You bring us around the circle to rebirth  
Within us you dance  
Forever.

- Starhawk, *Singing the Living Tradition* #524

Small Group Ministry Session

***Reproductive Justice: Choice and Loss***

By Jessica Halperin; for “Circles of Reflection Workshop,” General Assembly, June 21, 2012

**Opening Words:**

Conscience is the name given the governing principles of life to which a person is ultimately committed. The totality of the self and thus the integrity of personhood is involved in the moral dictates of conscience. This is the primary arena of the spirit’s struggle with the moral claims made by the will of God. The depths of one’s own being and the ground of meaning of one’s own existence are expressed in the struggles of conscience.

- Paul D. Simmons; *Personhood, the Bible, and the Abortion Debate*

**Check-in:** How are you today?

**Focus/Topic:** *Reproductive Justice: Choice and Loss*

As members of a religious tradition with a long and substantive history working for reproductive rights and a firm commitment to anti-racism, multiculturalism, and social justice, Unitarian Universalists are called to widen the current socio-political debate on “reproductive rights” to one on “reproductive justice.”

Within the framework of reproductive justice, the Unitarian Universalist Association works against the cultural, political, economic, and structural constraints that limit women’s access to health care and full reproductive choice. Reproductive justice, a concept put forth by coalitions of women of color, promotes the right of all women to have children, not to have children, and to raise their children in safe and healthy environments. It does not isolate or pit important social issues against each other, rather it works to promote these rights across many areas, including comprehensive sex education, economic justice, environmental justice, violence against women, and racial justice.

1. Unitarian Universalists affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Please share experiences you have had in which your autonomy over your reproductive and sexual life (or lack thereof) impacted your sense of your own ‘inherent worth and dignity’?
2. Tell us about an important moment in your reproductive life. What made it important, and how does that moment relate to your faith and the rest of your life?
3. The bodily autonomy of pregnant (and potentially pregnant) people is being threatened in legislatures across the United States and in Washington D.C. What role do faith communities have in the current debates?

**Check-out/Likes & Wishes:** How was the session for you?

**Closing Words:** “The Larger Circle” by Wendell Berry, *Singing the Living Tradition*, #646

We clasp the hands of those that go before us,	And the larger circle of all creatures
And the hands of those who come after us.	Passing in and out of life
We enter the little circle of each other’s arms	Who move also in a dance
And the larger circle of lovers,	To a music so subtle and vast that no ear hears it
Whose hands are joined in a dance.	Except in fragments.

Small Group Ministry Session

***Reproductive Justice: Raising Children***

By Jessica Halperin; for “Circles of Reflection Workshop,” General Assembly, June 21, 2012

**Opening Words:** “That Passeth All Understanding” by Denise Levertov, *Oblique Prayer*

An awe so quiet

I don't know when it began.

A gratitude

had begun

to sing in me.

Was there

some moment

dividing

song from no song?

When does dewfall begin?

When does night

fold its arms over our hearts

to cherish them?

When is daybreak?

**Check-in:** How are you today?

**Focus/Topic:** *Reproductive Justice: Raising Children*

As members of a religious tradition with a long and substantive history working for reproductive rights and a firm commitment to anti-racism, multiculturalism, and social justice, Unitarian Universalists are called to widen the current socio-political debate on “reproductive rights” to one on “reproductive justice.”

Within the framework of reproductive justice, the Unitarian Universalist Association works against the cultural, political, economic, and structural constraints that limit women's access to health care and full reproductive choice. Reproductive justice, a concept put forth by coalitions of women of color, promotes the right of all women to have children, not to have children, and to raise their children in safe and healthy environments. It does not isolate or pit important social issues against each other, rather it works to promote these rights across many areas, including comprehensive sex education, economic justice, environmental justice, violence against women, and racial justice.

1. From your experience, describe the social, political, economic, and spiritual conditions in which you raised/would like to raise/believe are important to raising healthy children.
2. How does/can the religious community and government create and sustain those healthy conditions?
3. How can we support a woman when the desired conditions are not in place? How can we support her sense of worth and dignity when things are less than ideal?

**Check-Out/Likes & Wishes:** How was the session for you?

**Closing Words:** By Elizabeth M. Strong

Seek for the spirit of life that is within you;  
that you might know more fully its power and strength.

Seek for the spirit of life that surrounds you;  
that you might know more fully its connection to you.

Seek for the spirit of life that is within others;  
that you might enter more fully into the community  
that embraces us, this day and every day.

Small Group Ministry Session

***Failure Is Impossible: The Impact of Women***

Rev. Helen Zidowecki, For “Circles of Reflection Workshop,” General Assembly, June 21, 2012

**Opening Words**

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal... Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country.”

Imagine being with 300 people at the Seneca Falls, New York, Convention in 1848 for the development of the Declaration of Sentiments against the grievances regarding the status and rights of women in all areas of life, *primarily the right to vote!* May we engage the energy of the movement that lasted over 70 years as we work on Social Justice for women in our time.

**Check-in:** How you are today?

**Topic:** *Failure is Impossible: The Impact of Women*

We remember the large number of Unitarian and Universalist women who were involved in the struggle to gain the vote for women. In that remembering, we pause to reflect on how we, as Unitarian Universalist women live into the responsibility of that right. As we approach the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of having the right to vote, what do you see as the impact of women having the vote? What has been accomplished? How have women made a difference? What is our call to action?

1. What impressions did you receive as you were growing up about the role of women in the public sector, in business, in the church?
2. How have experiences of women changed, from the time of your grandmother and mother to yourself and daughters? What is the perception of women for the future?
3. Describe your role or influence as a women? Does being Unitarian Universalist factor into this description?

**Check-out/Likes and Wishes:** How was this session for you?

**Closing Words** by Elizabeth Padgham

When the first Suffrage parade was being planned in New York City I thought little of it as affecting the church. However, it dawned on me that the busy chatting would stop as I came into sight... Finally, a group of the women told me that I would disgrace the church if I marched in the Suffrage parade. The “disgrace” was said to be a quotation from one of the husbands... I told them I thought in time to come the church would be proud to know their minister was broad enough to walk in the first suffrage parade... I was thinking I would be asked to resign, but I wouldn't back down even then. I did march, and the affair was never brought up again.

Theodore Stanton and Harriet Stanton Biatch, eds., *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her letters. Diary, and Reminiscences* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1922), 40, excerpt

Resource: UU Women's Heritage Society GAWorship services “Failure is Impossible!” (1995) and “They Showed the Way” (1998). <http://www.uuwhs.org/worfailure.php>

Small Group Ministry Session

***Failure Is Impossible: Perceptions and Assumptions***

Rev. Helen Zidowecki, For “Circles of Reflection Workshop,” General Assembly, June 21, 2012

**Opening Words**

Persistence. Courage. Determination.

The bitter cold winter of 1917, a world at war,

President Woodrow Wilson was outspoken opponent of women’s suffrage.

A new Woman’s Party, led by Alice Paul, took to the streets.

Hundreds of women marched and picketed the White House

Women were arrested, imprisoned, and mistreated.

Their action was very controversial, even within the ranks of suffragists.

One of the pickets was Olympia Brown, Universalist minister, then 82 years old.

The movement toward rights for women, specifically the right to vote, extended from the Seneca Convention in 1848 to the ratification of the nineteenth amendment to the United States constitution August 18, 1920. The goal may have been universal, their actions were not. How too, today, there are multiple paths to the vision of Social Justice for women. What is your path?

**Check-in:** How you are today?

**Topic:** *Failure Is Impossible: Perceptions and Assumptions*

We remember the large number of Unitarian and Universalist women who were involved in the struggle to gain the vote for women. In that remembering, we pause to reflect on how we, as Unitarian Universalist women live into the responsibility of that right. As we approach the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of having the right to vote, what do you see as the impact of women having the vote? What has been accomplished? How have women made a difference? What is our call to action?

1. We frequently hear the term “the women’s vote” in polls and in discussing the strength of political leaders. Do you see yourself as a woman who has political power? Do you find that others perceive you the same way or differently from your perception? How?
2. The implication of “the women’s vote” is that women will vote a specific, and predictable, way. Does being a Unitarian Universalist woman make a difference on how you make decisions on issues or actions? How?
3. Does the filter of being a woman overlap with other filters – such as race and ethnicity, class, culture? How?

**Check-out/Likes and Wishes:** How was this session for you?

**Closing Words**

Olympia Brown was one of the very few women of that first generation of suffragists who lived to see the final ratification of the woman suffrage amendment on August 26, 1920. A few days later, she told her congregation at the Universalist Church in Racine, Wisconsin, “It is worth a lifetime to behold the victory.”

Theodore Atanton and Harriet Stanton Biatch, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, NY: Harper & Bros, 1922, p.50

Resource: UU Women’s Heritage Society GAWorship services “Failure is Impossible!” (1995) and “They Showed the Way” (1998). <http://www.uuwhs.org/worfailure.php>

## Small Group Ministry Session

### ***Failure Is Impossible: Involvement***

Rev. Helen Zidowecki, For “Circles of Reflection Workshop,” General Assembly, June 21, 2012

#### **Opening words**

“The only question left to be settled now is: Are women persons? I scarcely believe any of our opponents will have the hardihood to say they are not. Being persons, then, women are citizens, and no State has a right to make any new law, or to enforce any old law, which shall abridge their privileges or immunities. Hence, every discrimination against women in the constitutions and laws of the several States is today null and void, precisely as is every one against negroes.

We no longer petition legislature or Congress to give us the right to vote, but appeal to women everywhere to exercise their too long neglected “citizen’s right.” ... It is on this line that we propose to fight our battle for the ballot — peaceably but nevertheless persistently — until we achieve complete triumph and all United States citizens, men and women alike, are recognized as equals in the government”.

So spoke Susan B. Anthony in defense of her right as a citizen. She had been so bold as to go to the polls in Rochester, New York, to vote in 1872. Miss Anthony was arrested, taken to the city jail, and charged with a fine which she refused to pay. Involvement with risk!

**Check-in:** How you are today?

**Topic:** *Failure Is Impossible: Involvement*

We remember the large number of Unitarian and Universalist women who were involved in the struggle to gain the vote for women. In that remembering, we pause to reflect on how we, as Unitarian Universalist women live into the responsibility of that right. As we approach the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of having the right to vote, what do you see as the impact of women having the vote? What has been accomplished? How have women made a difference? What is our call to action?

1. Share your involvement in voting, in working for a specific issue, running for office, or other such action. What inspired you to be involved? What role does your being a woman play in the level of your activity? How has/does being involved feel? What impact does your involvement have?
2. What issues need your attention now? What is the women’s perspective on the issue?
3. What barriers have you experienced or witnessed to being involved as a woman? Are all women able to vote or involved in other ways? What support is needed to overcome these barriers (including support systems for involvement, such as child care, transportation)?

**Check-out/Likes and Wishes:** How was the session for you?

#### **Closing Words**

Although Susan B. Anthony did not live to behold the victory, she kept the faith to the end. Her last words were “Failure is impossible!” She was right. And now it is up to us to continue the influence of women toward justice in all areas of our lives.

Resource: UU Women’s Heritage Society GAWorship services “Failure is Impossible!” (1995) and “They Showed the Way” (1998). <http://www.uuwhs.org/worfailure.php>

Small Group Ministry Session

***The Gifts I Bring to Social Justice Work***

Rev. Helen Zidowecki, *Social Justice Work...Through Small Group Ministry*, UU SGM Network

**Opening Words:**

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Bible: Romans 12:6-8, New King James Version

**Check-in:** How are things going for you today?

**Topic/Activity:**

Gifts we have are not a prerequisite for effective Social Justice work, but the gifts we possess are channels for the spirit of life and learning. Become aware of them and use them.

Gifts that we receive may not be expected, but the gifts of others are connectors for receiving wisdom. Become aware of them and give thanks.

Gifts that we give differ in time and place, but the gifts of the present have the greatest impact.

Give with humility and do not hide your gifts.

Social Justice work needs all of our gifts. Helen Zidowecki

1. Identify at least 3 gifts that you bring to Social Justice work. If possible, share experiences when you have been able to use your gifts.
2. Share a time when your gifts contributed to the religious growth or spiritual development of another person.
3. What gifts are evident in the group that you are working with? How can your gifts complement the gifts of others?
4. How do we uncover and enhance the gifts of others?

**Check-Out/Likes and wishes:** How did the session go for you?

**Closing:** “This Little Light of Mine”, *Singing the Living Tradition* #118

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Everywhere I go, I’m gonna let it shine.

Building up a world, I’m gonna let it shine.

Small Group Ministry Session  
***After the Action, Reflection***

Rev. Helen Zidowecki, *Social Justice Work...Through Small Group Ministry*, UU SGM Network

**Opening Words**

Given the enormity of the social change that confronts us – change that we would all like to see – the thing that I predict will give us the most hope and strength to make change happen is if we make sure that we learn how to celebrate. Let's build celebration into our lives and come from that. That's first. Otherwise we're going to get overwhelmed by the immensity. Out of a spirit of celebration I think we'll have the energy to do whatever it takes to bring about social change.

Marshall B. Rosenberg, *The Heart of Social Change*, Puddle Dancer Press, 2005, p.44.

**Check-in/Sharing:** How is it with you today?

**Topic/Activity:** I am not interested in all of the details of the action. I want to celebrate taking action about issues of importance to us.

I do not need to hear all of the various positions. I want to know how we can hear the messages of many sides in order to better understand the implications of our own positions, immediately and for the long-term.

I do not want to know "how it went." I want to know what engaging in Social Justice work has meant for you. Helen Zidowecki

1. What did engaging in Social Justice work feel like? What parts felt energizing and what parts, if any, felt like obligation?
2. What were the moments of realization, of connection, the "aha" moments? What did you learn about yourself and others by doing this Social Justice work?
3. In what ways is service part of your Unitarian Universalist faith?
4. What was revealed about what it means to be human, about good and evil, about what it means to be in solidarity with the oppressed?
5. What changes, if any, would you like to make in your own actions or habits as a result of doing the service?

**Likes and Wishes** How was this session for you? Do you feel heard? Accepted?

**Closing Words** "Beloved Community of Earth"

The end for which we strive is the Beloved Community of Earth. Its central value is Justice, a principle which is achieved through the integration of the values depicted. The core ethical value which is the glue to this whole process is reverence for life.

First is *freedom* – self-determination to participate in those processes which affect one's life.

Liberation is freedom from the underside – working against all kinds of oppression – classism, racism, sexism, ableism, ethno-centrism, nationalism.

Second is *equity* – the fair allocation of the resources of the earth. Justice is approximated when there is sufficiency for all – superfluity for none.

Third is *community* – of being a responsible part of the web of all existence – while solidarity is the human manifestation of our sense of togetherness. This is the common good, the public interest. Democracy becomes a religious value.

Richard Gilbert, *Giving Life the Shape of Justice Workbook*, Washington State Unitarian Universalist Voices, Giving Life the Shape of Justice Workshop: A Workshop for UU Congregations, March 24, 2012, Pacific Northwest District