



# the communicator

THE NEWSLETTER OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN'S FEDERATION

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## UUWF: A Congregation Beyond

By Rev. Marti Keller  
UUWF Affiliated Minister

In 2012, Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) President Peter Morales wrote a white paper in which he re-argued for Unitarian Universalism as a movement, not just congregations who covenant together around purposes and principles. Re-argued because there has been a continued waxing and waning of our sense of ourselves as one or the other – or a combination of the two.



Rev. Morales and I began our UU ministerial careers around the same time (late 1990s) and both coincidentally came from journalism backgrounds on the West Coast. Perhaps that is one reason why I resonate so strongly with his sense that while parish ministry and the internal workings of congregations are crucial to our strength and growth, the notion of Congregations and Beyond – UU without edifice, without traditional walls – is also powerful.

He was talking about our virtual congregations like Church of the Larger Fellowship and Church of the Younger Fellowship; other mostly cyberspace groups like the many websites, Facebook groups, and the bloggers who people them; coffee houses and other Meet-Up groups. How do we capture the energy of these alternative forms of gathering as UUs? How do we count them? What can they teach us?

The UU Women's Federation has been essentially a Beyond Congregations movement for more than 50 years. This independent associate member organization and its predecessors in the Unitarian and Universalist faith traditions was and is built on the formal and informal groups of women and individuals, who are our members, and others who are connected to us. They may or may not belong to UU communities. We are either augmenting their UU affiliations or in some way provide it.

Since our beginnings, we have offered ways to identify both as women and religious liberals and to lend our collective voices to our mission, which is to advance justice for women and girls and support their spiritual growth. At one time it was through real-time, in-the-flesh groups within our congregations. Increasingly it is more and more interconnected in e-space with resources and forums for mutual education and advocacy.

Since October 2013, it has been my privilege to be the affiliated “community” minister with the UUWF, the community and congregation being the women in our movement. My pulpit is the [blog](#) I write weekly about issues of interest and urgency: reproductive justice, economic justice, domestic violence. I have also visited a number of our UU churches and fellowships, preaching about the contemporary status of women and girls – in this country and around the world – and offering Second Hour and other adult education programs using the excellent UUA curricula.

Both online and in face-to-face meetings, I represent UUWF with my legislative ministry colleagues within and outside Unitarian Universalism, including the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) I have advised the UUWF Board of Trustees and our President Kirstie Lewis in particular on amicus briefs, petitions, and letters we might sign on to in these arenas. I stood alongside my fellow members of RCRC's Coalition Council in Washington, DC earlier this spring outside the Supreme Court as the justices listened to arguments in the case brought by Hobby Lobby and another private corporation asking to be able to deny their employees access to contraception coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

I act as UUWF ministerial liaison to a number of our UU professional groups, letting them know about our grants and funding panels, hoping to broaden and deepen their involvement. In the next year I will be asking

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*Advancing justice  
for women and girls,  
and promoting  
their spiritual growth.*

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# Report from Our Clara Barton Intern

by Hanna Christianson  
UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues

**T**he UUWF Clara Barton Internship for Women's Issues in the UUA's Washington Office for Advocacy was founded in 2002 with a \$200,000 donation from the UUWF, which helped raise a matching amount to form a permanent endowment for the program. Hanna served as intern from October 2013 through July 2014.

As my time as the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation Clara Barton Intern comes to a close, I feel blessed to have started my career path with an organization that so closely shares my passion for social justice work, particularly within gender-based issues. I have gained an immense amount of knowledge and skills during my time at the Unitarian Universalist Association that I will continue to apply to my future.



During my time at the UUA, I have worked on a wide array of women's issues and campaigns ranging from abortion and birth control rights, to military sexual assault prevention, to immigration reform, and many other issues. Through all the successes and challenges facing women's freedom and rights, I have felt most passionate about the Reproductive Justice Advocacy Community, that began during my time as the Clara Barton Intern.

This Advocacy Community has fused education and direct action campaigns to focus on the multitude of issues covered by the umbrella of reproductive justice. With a goal of engaging UU reproductive justice advocates across the country, the Advocacy Community consisted of action alerts focused on current reproductive justice issues and upcoming events, educational webinars, and collaborative conference calls.

The bimonthly webinars presented issue experts on a particular reproductive justice issue, including immigration, the LGBTQ movements, and the role of men in the reproductive justice movement. These educational webinars created a great jumping-off point for conversation on loaded topics and their relationship with the reproductive justice movement. I hope participants of these webinars gained a deeper understanding of the

issues and were able to relay that information to others in their local community. Social justice has always relied on the dissemination of information through networks of passionate activists, and we must tap into this resource to push the reproductive justice movement forward.

I also helped organize bimonthly Reproductive Justice Advocacy Community conference calls, combining upcoming events and discussion. These conference calls provided a space for UU congregations and reproductive justice advocates from across the country to forge connections and work through the successes and challenges of creating reproductive justice groups in their communities. I believe by creating the space to have such conversations, the conference calls were successful in building reproductive justice momentum across the country.

Through nationwide organizing efforts around reproductive justice issues this past year, our community was able to successfully support the freedom and rights of all. Collectively, we defeated anti-abortion campaigns, further protected LGBTQ individuals from discrimination, and supported immigrant women and families access to health care and fair immigration reform.

We are currently standing up against the harmful Supreme Court decisions in *McCullen v. Coakley* and *Hobby Lobby v. Burwell* because our progressive faith knows that "women's access to key preventative contraceptive services is essential not only to their health, but also to their rights including religious liberty, equality, and economic security" (<http://www.uua.org/news/pressroom/pressreleases/296165.shtml>).

I hope the next Clara Barton Intern will continue to work on both local and national reproductive justice issues, partnering with those both in and outside the traditional women's rights movement. It is time for us to draw from our interconnected web by supporting other social justice issues, and in turn, garnering support for reproductive justice.

I could not be more proud or privileged than to have worked beside each of you these past ten months. While I acknowledge there is still much to be accomplished in the reproductive justice movement, I have great faith that this group of dedicated advocates will successfully lead the charge to see full reproductive justice for all.

# A “Hot” Message from Your President

By Kirstie Lewis, PhD  
President/CEO

I'm writing this in early August, and where I sit, it is *hot*. The earth feels parched, and I worry about drought and wildfires

and mudslides and earthquakes caused by the (our) thoughtless and ignorant consumption of the world's resources. It is *very hot* in those places on the globe

where warfare is at hand – where death and destruction, corruption and terrorism, lying and despair, deceit and mistrust seem to be all I hear about or read about.



My emotions run *hot* when I consider the ongoing backsliding in the fight for equity and justice for women and girls here and around the world. It feels as though we are again fighting the battles we thought we had won in the 60s and 70s. Women are losing access to contraception, to abortion, to adequate health care in general. Economic pressures are unequally applied to single mothers who can't afford child care; to older women who are widowed and live in poverty because they can't afford their medications; young women caught up in unwanted pregnancies from rape, ignorance or contraceptive failure. Are we moving forward at all?

Hard as it is, I know I must turn my attention to positive efforts toward change. My heart was lifted to read our affiliated minister's August 5 blog – "[\(Some\) Good News for Summer.](#)"

My heart was lifted recently when I attended a dinner designed to highlight the work of [ANSWER](#) (American-Nepali Students' and Women's Educational Relief), a nonprofit that helps the poorest of children in Nepal get decent educations aimed at finding careers.

These children are then encouraged to develop a long-lasting desire to “pay it forward”

by giving some of their earnings back to ANSWER to help other poor children. This nonprofit was started and is continuing to have wild and wonderful success largely due to the efforts of one man, Earle Canfield, who began this work 14 years ago. I am now a sponsor for a young woman who wants to become a doctor and practice in her home village.

My heart was lifted when I spoke to a woman from the First UU Church of Portland at the UUA General Assembly in Providence this past June. She wants to develop a program for next year's GA that will highlight the fantastic determination of the women of her congregation over the 150 years of their existence. In fact, Lorraine tells me that money was raised and her church founded in 1865 by seven women originally from New England, who met initially in a sewing circle.

My heart was lifted when I recently spoke to our own Executive Administrator, Ellen Spencer, and she reminded me about all the work that UU women have done over the 50 years since the UUWF was founded. This was an appropriate follow-up to the work of our predecessor organizations, the Association of Universalist women (formed in 1869) and the Alliance of Unitarian women (1890), which consolidated in 1963 to form the UUWF. We women have worked hard and achieved much, and we mustn't lose sight of this.

My heart was lifted again at GA, at our workshop, “Partnering for Social Justice.” It highlighted the kind of partnerships that women seek, perhaps because women value collaboration and inclusivity. We heard from Nancy Spear about “Amigas de Amado,” a project funded by UUWF's Equity and Justice Grants Panel.

Launched in 2012, the project is still going strong. Nancy and other women from the UU Congregation of Green Valley, now located in Amado, AZ, took a considerable amount of time determining which community groups to partner with to best bring increased services to women and girls in their new town's Hispanic community. They worked with an after-school program and with a local Hispanic language

church to provide activities just for girls one day a week, and to help encourage the mothers to attend English classes.

My heart was lifted when, at our General Assembly reception, we saw the video program created by Rev. Suzanne Nazian, a project funded by a 2013 Margaret Fuller Grant. It details the efforts of women who planned and hosted the 1893 Women's Congress, many of whom were Unitarians and Universalists. These women worked hard and suffered many rejections and failures in their efforts to increase the visibility of women.

My heart was lifted when I attended the panel facilitated by Jessica Halpern, a former UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues, which addressed that while women from different generations have much in common, we need to get to know each other better and figure out how we can help each other.

My heart was lifted when I began to really look into the Reproductive Justice Curriculum designed by Jessica Halpern, which I have decided to teach in my congregation this fall. It is a work of depth and passion and *hotness*, and I highly recommend that you look into offering it yourself in your own congregation. It is laid out in detail in such a way that anyone could lead these sessions. Do it!

So I say to you women spread out across our great United States and beyond? What are your *hot button* projects? What makes you *hot* enough to stand up and become active in improving the lives of women and girls? What are you already doing along those lines? How can we help you to multiply those efforts and make them known to more of us? What are you doing that our funding programs could support?

Our board will meet right after Labor Day. Look for news of our activities on our website and Facebook pages. Changes are afoot. Be the first to know! Join us and keep us moving along even in these *hottest* of times.

# Presenting Our 2014 Grant and Scholarship Recipients

## Margaret Fuller Grants Program

Founded in 1989 as the Feminist Theology Awards, this program funds scholarly projects by UU women that explore feminist thought and action within a religious or spiritual context. This year's recipients are:

**Carla Walter, PhD**, of Mountain View, CA, received a \$4,000 grant in support of her project, "Dancing in the Spirit of Recovery." The funds will support research of spiritual dance rituals from various non-European cultures and production costs of a workbook/curriculum on using dance rituals



to support healing, spiritual growth, and recovery, along with an accompanying DVD.

**The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)** received a \$500 grant in support of a series of teleconferences featuring feminists working in the fields of ministry, spirituality, and theology.

## Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley Scholarship Program

This program awards funds for general support to individuals who identify as women of color, Latina, or Hispanic and who are either aspirants or candidates for the UU ministry or are candidates in the UUA's religious education or music leadership credentialing programs.



This year's recipient of a \$1,500 scholarship is **Ranwa Hammamy**, a student at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

## Equity & Justice Grants Program

The program funds projects conducted by Unitarian Universalist congregations, organizations, or groups that aim to achieve social justice for women in areas such as education; women's health; reproductive justice; age and job discrimination; poverty; domestic violence and child abuse. No applications were received this year.

## Thanks to Our Donors

We extend a heartfelt "thank you" to all the individuals, women's groups, and congregations who supported our work through generous donations made between January 1 and December 31, 2013.

### Olympia Brown Circle (\$2,500-\$4,999)

Edward A. Simmons, Hempstead, NY

### Dorothea Dix Circle (\$1,000-\$2,499)

Arlington, MA - Alliance of the First Parish UU

Atlanta, GA - UU Congregation of Atlanta

Julia and Arnold Bradburd, Gwynedd, PA

Brooklyn, NY - Women's Alliance, First Unitarian Congregational Society

Marcia M. Bystrom, Florence, AL

Dr. Kirstie Lewis, Bellevue, WA

Manhasset, NY - Women's Group, UU Congregation at Shelter Rock

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### Maria Louise Baldwin Circle (\$500-\$999)

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Kansas City, MO - Demeters, All Souls UU Church

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Norwell, MA - First Parish Unitarian

Paramus, NJ - Women's Alliance, Central Unitarian Church

Salem, OR - UUWF, UU Congregation of Salem

Stockton, CA - UU Alliance, First UU Church of Stockton

Swampscott, MA - UU Women of Greater Lynn, UU Church of Greater Lynn

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College Station, TX - Woman's Alliance, UU Church of the Brazos Valley

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Kirkwood, MO - Women's Alliance, Eliot Unitarian Chapel

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CONT. FROM PAGE 4

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## Congregation,

CONT. FROM PAGE 1

100 of my fellow female clergy to join a New  
Prophetic Sisterhood, covenanting to work as  
individuals and collectively on reproductive  
justice: lending their voices, inspiring their  
congregants.

I am eager to hear from the women in our  
larger movement about other ways to be your  
affiliated minister in this exciting initiative  
to look and, more importantly, act Beyond  
Congregations.

New York, NY - Ethelwyn Doolittle Justice  
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**UU**Women

*Advancing justice for women and girls,  
and promoting their spiritual growth.*

## Welcoming New Board Members

*Here is some information about the two most recent additions to the UUWF Board of Trustees.*

**Gretchen Ohmann**, of St. Joseph, MI, is our Vice President/Communications



and Fundraising. Gretchen is a member of the Berrien UU Fellowship in St. Joseph, where she has served as president and a member of the Fellowship's board of trustees. She has also served as chair of the Central Midwest District Nominating Committee and been active in a number of UU women's organizations, including the continental UU Women and Religion, and the UU Women's Connection (formerly the Central Midwest District UUWF).

**Lynn Thomas**, of Meredith, NH, is our Vice President/Funding Programs. She returns to



UUWF leadership following previous service on the board from 1998-2001. During that time, she helped revision UUWF's Feminist Theology Awards, now our Margaret Fuller Grants Program. A member of the Church of the Larger Fellowship UU, Lynn is a former Clara Barton District Executive. She has served as president of the former New Hampshire/Vermont District, as a district Women and Religion chair, and the UUA Task Force I on Clergy Misconduct and Sexual Abuse.