

the communicator

THE NEWSLETTER OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN'S FEDERATION

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UUWF Awarded Featured Presentation At General Assembly 2006

The General Assembly Planning Committee has selected UUWF's proposal, "There is More Peace Somewhere," for one of only four Featured Presentation program slots at this June's General Assembly in St. Louis. Our speaker is Dr. Azza Karam, Senior Policy Research Advisor at the UN Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Arab States. Dr. Karam's experience spans the fields of multi-religious collaboration, international gender issues, democratization, human rights, conflict, and political Islam. (Denny Davidoff shares more information about Dr. Karam on page 5.)

Join Us in Celebrating Rev. Shirley Ranck

Plans for honoring Rev. Shirley Ranck, author of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, at General Assembly are moving forward. UUWF will present this award to Shirley at an evening reception, with admission by ticket and sponsorships encouraged and welcomed. To receive ticketing information or an invitation to become a sponsor, contact the UUWF office (espencer@uua.org or 617-948-4692).

Long-time Member-Donor Awarded UUWF GA Program Slot

Nancy Vedder-Shults, Madison, WI – who was also a recipient of a UUWF Feminist Theology Award for her audiotape, *Chants for the Queen of Heaven* – has been awarded one of UUWF's five programming slots at the upcoming GA. Nancy's program, "Womanspirit, Sisterspirit: Toward Right Relationship Among Ourselves," will explore the relationship between spiritual wisdom and social action. Awarding Nancy the program slot is part of an ongoing UUWF effort to make some of our GA program slots available to women at the grassroots who would not otherwise have access to them. Contact the UUWF Office for guidelines for applying for a GA program slot.

Challenging Gender Oppression: First UUWF Grants Awarded

By Linda Lu Burciaga
Chair, UUWF Grants Panel

You could hear the excitement in our voices as we commenced our first conference call to discuss the proposals that had arrived for the newly formed UUWF Grants Program. We had assumed that this would be a difficult process, especially since this was our committee's first time working all together. Although it is always difficult to have to turn down funding for worthy ventures, the four we did select are projects of which we are most proud.

The Carbondale (IL) Unitarian Fellowship was awarded a \$5,000 grant for its project, "Busy Bees of Kabwe, Zambia Women's Cooperative." Although she had never written a grant proposal before, Carla Feldhamer submitted "Busy Bees" with enthusiasm and passion. The purpose of the project is to provide a permanent building, two sewing machines and a knitting machine for women affected by AIDS so that they can support themselves and their families. Ms. Feldhamer had visited Africa in 2003 and, to quote, "even with my 19 years of experience as a hospice nurse, I was unprepared to witness firsthand the dying of an entire generation and the orphans left behind." Upon her return to Carbondale, the church became significantly involved in a collaborative effort with Hospice of Southern Illinois to partner with these remarkable women of Zambia. In the past, money raised provided food, clothing, and school fees for the children, but the "Busy Bees" had no permanent structure in which to do their much-needed craft work. With this UUWF grant, they will now have a "home" and new machines to expand their income-generating capacity.

"Hope Not Hell: Building a UU Women's Prison Ministry," submitted by the Church of the Larger Fellowship, was awarded \$2,500. CLF has long provided services to UUs who are geographically isolated. Others are isolated by disability or economics. This new ministry will provide services specifically designed for women in prison. The UUWF grant will provide funds for program design and planning which



The Busy Bees of Kabwe, Zambia, a women's cooperative that helps AIDS/HIV-affected women support themselves and their families, has received a \$5,000 UUWF Grant.

may include a "woman to woman" pen pal program, adaptation of UU curricula for use in women's prisons, recruitment of appropriate pastoral caregivers for women, advocacy materials and activities regarding issues of concern to women, and provision of resource materials for libraries in women's prisons. With this UUWF grant, CLF can begin to provide much-needed spiritual and personal support. For information or to become a Prison Pen Pal, go to www.clfuu.org and click on Prison Ministry.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Myers submitted and received a matching grant of \$2,500 for "Mira, Mama-Radio PSAs on Human Trafficking." Dr. Genelle Grant of Florida Migrant Interstate Program explained that public service announcements will be prepared in Spanish, Haitian-Creole, and the dialects of Q'uche and Q'anjobal which will include signs of trafficking and what questions to ask a young person so as to investigate the safety of school, living and working conditions.

As most UUs are aware, one of our most popular adult religious education curricula has been, and continues to be, "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven." Unitarian Universalist Women & Religion – a UUA affiliate organization – received a \$5,000 grant for the "Cakes

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UUWF Intern's Work Focuses on Reproductive Rights, Violence Against Women

By Meredith Schonfeld-Hicks
UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues



Meredith Schonfeld-Hicks is the second UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues.

It is hard to believe that I've been in Washington for over four months now! It has been a busy time filled with many adjustments and new experiences. Even though it is a frustrating time to be a progressive, liberal voice in Washington, it has been great to work in coalition with other religious and secular groups that share our values.

In collaboration with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and six other religious groups, I helped draft a comment that was submitted to the FDA regarding the unnecessary delay in releasing Emergency Contraception as an over-the-counter medication.

The Violence Against Women Act was reauthorized and signed into law on January 5th 2006. This bill reauthorized existing programs and created new ones to meet emerging needs of communities working to prevent domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. Thanks to those of you who took the time to call your Senators and Representatives and let them know why this issue is so important!

Most recently I have worked to oppose the confirmation of Judge Samuel Alito, Jr., as well as organize the second annual Sexuality Education Advocacy Training that will bring together 50 UU and United Church of Christ youth, young adults and adult allies this March to learn how to lobby for better sex education on the federal level and in their communities.

In addition to all of this, I have been engaging in weekly theological reflections that have helped me grow spiritually. I have attended anti-racism and anti-oppression trainings that have challenged and changed me. I also volunteer as an escort at a nearby reproductive health clinic that performs abortions.

I am looking forward to the next few months and to the challenges that I will face. If you want to read a more personal account of my experiences, please check out my online journal: www.meredithindc.blogspot.com

The UUWF Clara Barton Internship for Women's Issues in the UUA's Washington Office for Advocacy was founded with a \$200,000 donation from the UUWF, which helped raise a matching amount to form a permanent endowment for the program.

E-Mail Addresses Wanted

As part of our efforts to expand our capacity for immediate communication with members, UUWF is collecting e-mail addresses. To place your address on our growing list, send an e-mail to espencer@uua.org. In the subject line, put "Email Address." In the message, type your full name, complete address and phone number and, on a line by itself, your e-mail address. We thank you for your help with this.

2006 Margaret Fuller Awards Fund Projects

Promoting Small Group Work, Imaginative Theologies

Of the 12 proposals submitted for 2006 Margaret Fuller Awards, two new grants were given, along with additional funding to a prior grantee. One will help develop a series of sessions on feminist theology and theologians designed for use by small group ministry programs. Another will fund the exploration of a 21st century theology with ancient roots. The third continues the work on a feminist interfaith ritual for women with breast cancer.

Encountering Feminist Theologies

Dr. M'ellen Kennedy, MDiv, has been awarded \$3,000 to research and write a small group ministry demonstration project on "Encountering Feminist Theologies." Dr. Kennedy is a community minister, a consulting parish minister and community psychologist in Vermont, and co-founder and co-coordinator of the UU Small Group Ministries Network. She hopes through this project to increase the exposure to feminist theologies within congregations through sessions on images of the divine, violence and non-violence, spiritual experiences of women, and the language of God Talk. The sessions will include material from a wide variety of theologians such as: Rita Nakashima Brock, Susan Griffin, Rebecca Parker, and Alice Walker.

She expects to complete the research and development work by spring and pilot test them in a small group ministry program within a congregation. The completed series will be easily exportable to small group ministry or Covenant Group programs in UU congregations across the country, and/or in religious education programs for adults or youth, both female and male. Small groups by their structure and intention, she points out, are feminist in nature, with their emphasis on egalitarian shared leadership and their focus on honoring personal experience.

She hopes that group members will participate in several ways. They will have a chance to "wrestle in a supportive environment with how their own lives are impacted by issues raised by feminist theology, such as sex, sexuality, gender, power, race, class and environmental issues." Groups may go on to do further exploration of feminist theologies and post their sessions for others to use. They may reach out into their congregations and communities to lead a wor-

ship service or work with a battered women's shelter.

Gender Equality in the Sacred Marriage

Longtime Unitarian Universalist, art theorist and cultural critic Lisa Paul Steitfeld from Stamford, Connecticut has been awarded \$3,000 to help underwrite her exploration of a re-emerging icon of gender equality known as hieros gamos, which is Greek for sacred marriage. She expects to do an extensive series of talks and discussions with UU groups and museums, as well as publishing a short theological book describing her vision, based on ancient tradition, of "women participating equally with men from the perspective of a new paradigm of global interconnectedness."

She had previously given public voice to her "lifelong quest to connect with the sacred feminine" through UU worship services, arts reviews, and slide show presentations to regional museums.

A Ceremony of Memory and Hope

In 2005, WATER, the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual, was given a Margaret Fuller Award of \$3,000 to support the creation of "A Ceremony of Memory and Hope," a feminist interfaith ritual of remembrance, healing and empowerment. It was developed by Diann L. Neu, in collaboration with UU minister of religious education, Rev. Ginger Luke of River Road Unitarian Church in Bethesda, MD; Ami Gaston and Amari Pearson-Fields of The Mautner Project.

Women with breast cancer had contacted WATER to ask for blessings and liturgies to aid them on their cancer journeys. In response to their calls, a series of rituals, blessings and prayers are being written to mark some of the common experiences associated with this illness. The premier liturgy was celebrated in Greater Washington, DC, during Breast Cancer Awareness month in October 2005.

An additional grant of \$2,000 has been awarded to WATER to help with further development of rituals and for publication of the materials.



The Margaret Fuller Awards Program is named for this 19th century Unitarian feminist, author of *Women in the Nineteenth Century* and editor of the transcendental journal, the *Dial*.

"The longer the Margaret Fuller Awards Program in religious feminisms exists, the more the word goes out to a wider circle of Unitarian Universalist women, the more choices we have and the harder our decisions are," said Rev. Marti Keller, chair of the awards committee. Other committee members are: Linda Lu Burciaga, Newburyport, MA; Dr. Kirstie Lewis, Bellevue, WA; Phyllis Rickter, Arlington, MA; Rev. Tracy Sprowls Jenks, Jersey City, NJ.

Members of the committee rate proposals on how well the project fits with the mission and goals of this particular grants program and how clear the author is in describing her rationale for doing the project. Proposals are also rated on how creative a project is, other sources of financial support, and potential drawbacks in completion and dissemination of the finished products.

This group works year round by conference call to set policies for the criteria, applications, deadlines, accountability and evaluation of the awards, as well as reading and selecting the grants. In addition, members act as peer mentors for one or more awardee, providing encouragement and guidance until a grant project is completed.

The MFA committee charge is to encourage UU women to develop their potential by lifting up diverse voices engaged in the multi-faceted work of religious feminisms. Since 1989, over 35 awards have been given.

Ellen Fuller Forbes Honored with Clara Barton Sisterhood

The Women's Web of the UU Church of Portsmouth, NH – also known as South Church – honored member Ellen Fuller Forbes in December by enrolling her in UUWF's Clara Barton Sisterhood.

A long-time member of both South Church and its Women's Web, Ellen – who is a descendent of the noted 19th century Unitarian feminist Margaret Fuller - was honored for her more than 50 years of active membership in South Church. As those who honored her wrote:

“Ellen's interest and work in women's issues, aid for distressed teens and children, social justice in our country and the world at large, has modeled for many of us the

difference we can make by learning and participating. From her youth to the present, she has always been an influence and a presence in the Unitarian Universalist way of life. From her heritage of being a 5th generation Unitarian she became a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Portsmouth, NH, known as South Church, more than 50 years ago. Her four children were dedicated and raised through the church school.

“She has been active in South Church as a member of the Board of Trustees; a teacher in the Religious Education Department; an



Ellen Fuller Forbes (shown at center) with members of the South Church Women's Web of the UU Church of Portsmouth, NH, which recently enrolled her as a member of UUWF's Clara Barton Sisterhood.

active member of the Worship Associates; a staunch advocate for the implementation of Covenant Groups; and as a member of the Buddhist fellowship. There are many more areas of South Church in which she has been involved over the years.

“Ellen has always strongly believed in the rights of women, civil rights, peace, freedom and equality and has had an ongoing interest in the history of the South Church women. She is a strong supporter and participant in our UUWF Women For Women Program, that provides support and training for individual women in war-torn areas such as Iraq and Africa. From her professional life to this present day, she has always been a kind and generous woman who has made a difference in the lives of her family as well as her many friends and acquaintances.

“The sister members of the UUWF Chapter of the Portsmouth Church are proud to honor Ellen, in this way, as a Lifetime Member of the Clara Barton Sisterhood.”

The Clara Barton Sisterhood is a UUWF program named for and inspired by Universalist Clara Barton, who did not begin the work for which she is best known – organizing relief for the victims of war and disasters – until she was over 40. A special category of UUWF life membership for women aged 80 and over, the Sisterhood is a way for women's groups, churches, and other organizations or individuals to honor women for their contributions to church and community life.

For information about the Sisterhood, contact the UUWF Office or go to www.uuwf.org.

Challenging Gender Oppression: First UUWF Grants Awards

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Rev. Patty Franz will direct the Church of the Larger Fellowship's UU Women's Prison Ministry, recipient of a \$2,500 UUWF Grant.

Republication Project.” The popular theology course, published by the UUA in 1986, will be updated and republished. Goddess images from all over the world will be collected and displayed at the 2006 General Assembly in St. Louis. Many of these images will be included in the new edition, scheduled for publication before the 2007 General Assembly. The book,

Cakes for the Queen of Heaven, published in 1995, is also being republished and will be available at the 2006 General Assembly. For more information, visit www.uuwr.org. A whole new generation of women can now anticipate the arrival of “Cakes” in its new, updated form.

The UUWF Funding Panel had a tremendous first grant cycle. We look forward to presenting, in person, representatives of these four incredible projects at this year's General Assembly in St. Louis. Keep in mind our 2006 proposal deadline of October 15th. You, too, can participate in this important work which, as the Panel's mission statement says, “challenges the root causes and the consequences of gender oppression or that highlights and celebrates the achievements of women.”

Grants Panel members are Linda Lu Buriaga, Newburyport, MA; Rev. Marjorie Bowers-Wheatley, Wesley Chapel, FL; Rev. Elizabeth McMaster, Albuquerque, NM; Janet Prince, Portsmouth, NH; Justice Waidner, Tulsa, OK.

UN Senior Policy Research Advisor to Speak on Peace at UUWF Featured Presentation at GA

By Denny Davidoff
Past UUA Moderator and UUWF President



Dr. Azza Karam, will deliver a lecture, "There Is More Peace Somewhere," at UUWF's Featured Presentation slot at GA in St. Louis. Dr. Karam is Senior Policy Research Advisor at the UN Development Program, in the Regional Bureau for Arab States.

Those attending the 2006 UUA General Assembly in St. Louis have a treat in store in the person of Dr. Azza Karam who, under the joint sponsorship of the UUWF and the General Assembly Planning Committee, will deliver a lecture, "There Is More Peace Somewhere."

I first met Azza in 2002 when she was the Director of Women's Programs at the World Conference of Religions for Peace and I was a new member of the Trustee Council of that distinguished organization. I found her to be a delightful and stimulating combination

of intellectual/reformer/organizer, at once intense and merry, and passionate about the rights of women everywhere in the world. She is a native of Cairo and holds Egyptian and Dutch citizenship.

This is her official biography: Dr. Azza Karam serves as the Senior Policy Research Advisor at the United Nations Development Program, in the Regional Bureau for Arab States, where she coordinates the Arab Human Development Report and holds the Youth, Information and Communications Technology for Development (ICT), and Education portfolios. Prior to joining UNDP in New York, she was the Special Advisor on Middle East and Islamic Affairs to the Secretary General, and the Director of Women's Programs at the World Conference of Religions for Peace International.

Her experience spans the fields of multi-religious collaboration, international gender issues, democratization, human rights, conflict, and political Islam. Dr. Karam also worked as a Senior Program Officer at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), working in the Middle East (Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Yemen), Europe (The Netherlands, Sweden and Northern Ireland), where she managed training projects and programs, as well as lecturing on issues of conflict, peace building, transitional justice and humanitarian intervention. As a Programme Manager at

the Centre for the Study of Ethnic Conflict, at the Queens University of Belfast, Dr. Karam was a consultant and trainer to various international organizations in Yemen, Uzbekistan and Northern Ireland.

She has authored and published several books. They include *Transnational Political Islam* (Pluto, 2004); *Islamisms, Women and the State* (Macmillan, 1998); *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers* (IIDEA, 1998); and *A Woman's Place: Religions Women as Public Actors* (WCRP: 2001). Palgrave (formerly Macmillan), London, will publish Azza's forthcoming book, *Women in War and Peace-Building*.

Azza's list of published articles is very extensive, including: "Women in War and Peace: Victims But Not Negotiators?"; "Globalization, Decivilization and Islamisms"; "Islamist Parties in The Arab World: Ambiguities, Contradictions, and Perseverance"; "Muslim Women: Activists, Migrants, But Not Equal Citizens?"; "Engendering the Peace Process in the Middle East: Whither Women's Role?"; "Muslim Feminism and the Importance of a Mediating Role"; "Feminism in Egypt". She writes in English, Arabic and Dutch and is widely translated.

Azza is a dynamic speaker and teacher. I am personally proud that the UU Women's Federation is bringing her before a wide Unitarian Universalist audience which will, I am certain, be impressed with the woman and her message.

Online Resources

For celebrating Women's History Month in March:

- www.uuwhs.org/index.php
UU Women's Heritage Society
- www.geocities.com/Wellesley/Garden/1101/uuwomen1.html
Notable UU women
- www.nwhp.org
National Women's History Project. Regarded as "the clearinghouse" for U.S. women's history information and resources, the NWHP site provides excellent links to biography-rich sites for program ideas.

- www.infoplease.com/spot/womenshistory1.html
Celebrate with special features, quizzes, biographies, and timelines.
- www.feminist.org/other/womenshistorymonth
Feminist Majority Foundation
- www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/WomensStudies/hist.html
Includes sites with resources for celebrating Women's History Month. Archival Collections with significant holding relevant to women's history.

Some helpful websites for grant writing:

- www.grantproposal.com
- <http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/grants/first.html>
- www.npguides.org
- <http://grants.library.wisc.edu/organizations/proposalwebsites.html>
- <http://www.nonprofits.org/npofaq/19/64.html>

www.uuwf.org



UUWomen

*Advancing justice for women
through education and advocacy*

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In Memoriam

UUWF marks the recent passing of two outstanding women. We celebrate their lives and will continue to be inspired by the memory of their work.

Betty Friedan, 1921-2006

Coretta Scott King, 1927-2006