



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

Advocacy and Witness Programs

Congregational Advocacy and Witness • Holdeen India Program • International Resources • Washington Office for Advocacy

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Board Report
Fall, 2008
Advocacy and Witness Staff Group

The Rev. Meg A. Riley

So much going on, this time of turning! Leaves, leadership, calendar pages...

As you know, Rob Keithan has taken a year off from directing the Washington Office in order to do a seminary internship. He's serving First Church in Portland, OR, and is already excited about all that he'll be bringing back to us from there.

Meanwhile, Adam Gerhardstein has stepped up to the challenge of serving as Acting Director. It feels a lot like we have an interim director. New eyes are seeing things differently, challenging complacency, questioning routines. Great for all of us! And highly contagious.

Because I'll be in DC more this year, backing up Adam and coming in a little closer again, I have rented a tiny apartment with a friend who has a similar job with a nonprofit that brings her to DC monthly. Needless to say, we never go at the same time. But it's great to walk to the office, leave my tube of toothpaste, hop off the plane with only a small backpack. Anything to relieve the stress of travel!

The DC office is also gloriously resituated. If you ever can drop by, we'd love to see you at 666 11th St. NW, right across from the Metro Center metro station. It boggles my mind to remember that the dusty office space I stepped into 14 years ago would now fit, in its entirety, into our conference room!

I have submitted this board report in a different format, as we grow into policy governance together. I am still trying to discern what is most helpful for you to know. Please keep in touch (Mriley@uua.org) if there is something you still wonder about this, or if you have thoughts about what would be more helpful.

After a wonderful sabbatical summer, I am solidly back in the saddle. I spent my time gardening (and now am harvesting the rewards of that!) and also planning for some Gulf Coast related events for the Republican National Convention, which came to my home town. Regrettably, Gustav prevented Derrick Evans, one of our UUA-UUSC Gulf Coast partners, from getting here with his FEMA trailer. We punted, and were grateful that the media hype this time exceeded reality for the people in the Gulf Coast.

Our international work is solid under Eric Cherry's leadership. The work which we have done together, staff board and volunteers, can serve as a model for other program areas moving forward. Thanks for all of your vision and commitment.

My own creative energies are running in two directions this year. First, the UUA is partnering with All Souls Church to create a Social Justice Ministry/ Theology conference in January. This

invitational event will bring together theologians, ministers, youth directors, musicians, and others to talk about how we construct meaning and language in this vital area of our faith. We will create massive congregational materials from this event, and plan to debut much of what we learn at the Social Justice track of UU University in Salt Lake City.

Also, I continue to chair the board of Faith in Public Life: A Resource Center for Justice and the Common Good. (FPL) I am planning to cease service with other boards of directors this fall, for this is the organization I have dreamed of throughout my time in social justice work. (Which is reasonable, since I helped to give birth to it). If you are not already on our daily news digest, I urge you to go to www.faithinpubliclife.org and sign up for it.

Faith in Public Life is also working closely with the UUA to help us become a stronger and more vibrant faith organization. (It's not a conflict of interest; we don't pay them! FPL's mission is to resource other organizations.) If your congregation is not "on the map" at their website, consider getting yourselves there!

On a personal note, I want to thank the board for supporting this amazing organization, which is also the best workplace imaginable for creative, independent thinking. Best of luck in your own transformational work for the UUA, and do stay in touch. May we come as close as possible to embodying the leadership we yearn for!

UUA Office of International Resources

Rev. Eric Cherry, Director

Activities of the International Resources Office

Resourcing

- www.uua.org/international is now a well developed and organized source of resources for congregations. Recent improvements include:
 - Access to “Faith Without Borders” materials, i.e.
 - ∣ Introduction web page and brochure,
 - ∣ General Program booklet,
 - ∣ Specific booklets for each FWB program area,
 - ∣ FWB Flower Communion resource,
 - ∣ FWB Water Communion resource,
 - ∣ FWB UN Sunday resource,
 - Access to International Engagement Workshop materials, i.e.
 - ∣ General Workshop description,
 - ∣ 3-part PowerPoint describing the history and future of UU international engagement,
 - ∣ Theological Reflection materials,
 - ∣ Profiles of Congregational international engagement.
 - Access to worship resources, i.e. Hiroshima Day, ICUU monthly chalice lightings, etc.
 - Access to reading list for international engagement.
 - Access to discussion guide for “Journeying with Faith” and for UU Holdeen India Program related books.
- Continuing distribution of bi-weekly e-newsletter “i-news” .
- Participating in A&W staff group blog and with the UUA task force on staff blogging.
- Creating a monthly page for the UUA congregational mailing.
- Finalizing online materials for UU congregational involvement with President Sinkford’s Africa trip.
- Preparing DVD describing UU Holdeen India program.
- Preparing web/print resource for 60th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Maintaining/Developing relationships

- Provided preparation for President Sinkford’s participation in the G-8 Religious leaders summit
- Developed time-line for increasing cooperation between UUA/RKK.
- Developing sabbatical opportunity for UU ministers in the Philippines, and eventually other locations.
- Meeting and collaborating with representatives of historic international U/U judicatories.
- Supporting congregational initiative to sponsor youth exchange with German Unitarians.
- Supporting development of relationship between Unitarian Union of NE India and UU Holdeen India Program.
- Advancing relationships with U/U groups in Africa.
- Planning President Sinkford’s upcoming journey to Africa.
- Offered workshop at ANTS “21st century missions” event.
- Participating in UUSC identity/branding task force for UUA.

Institutional Developments

- The UUA's International Advisory Council is established and functioning effectively.
- The UUA's Ambassador corps has been established and is functioning extremely well.
- Working collaboratively with UUA departments, particularly the A&W staff group on internationally related projects.
- MOU with ICUU likely to be finalized in Autumn '08.

General Assembly

- Offered three international engagement workshops.
- Planned participation of International guests.
- Held networking breakfast with leaders of UU organizations with international focuses.
- Offered a consultation on UU clergy engagement re: Israel/Palestine.
- Prepared the UUA President's International breakfast.
- Met with congregational leaders about UU international engagement.

Unitarian Universalist Holdeen India Program (UUHIP)

Kathy Sreedhar, Director

UUHIP and HIVOS (Humanistic Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries), Netherlands have entered into an institutional collaboration to promote human rights and social change in India. HIVOS will provide an additional \$300,000 to UUHIP partners to build their organizations, networks and movements and issue-based advocacy efforts.

UUHIP and the UUA Office of International Resources are collaborating on several initiatives. The International Resources Office is making a DVD about UUHIP and five of our partners. Two Holdeen partners will work with the Unitarian Union of Northeast India to strengthen their organizations and work.

Bomb blasts in Ahmedabad, Gujarat (home of Mahatma Gandhi) have killed or injured several hundred people including members of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a long-term UUHIP partner. President Sinkford sent condolences as well as additional funds on behalf of the UUA.

Washington Office for Advocacy and Office of Congregational Advocacy and Witness

Adam Gerhardstein, Acting Director
Kat Liu, Assistant Director
Grace Garner, Legislative Assistant for
Women's Issues, UU Women's Federation
Clara Barton Internship
Lisa Swanson, Legislative Assistant for
Economic and Racial Justice

Alex Winnett, Program Associate for
Peacemaking, Mary Bonner Memorial Intern
Lesley Murdock, Office Manager

Susan Leslie, Director – Congregational
Advocacy and Witness
Audra Friend, Program Associate –
Congregational Advocacy and Witness

We have three priorities for this year.

1. Streamlining our Advocacy Work:

- We developed 14 Legislative Objectives for the 111th Congress, which will guide our work through 2010. The objectives are based on statements passed at General Assembly, an analysis of how we can be most effective, and a commitment to be accountable to traditionally marginalized communities. The objectives are available on-line, they have been sent out in the congregational mailing, and they are attached here..
- The office is implementing a new initiative called *Action of the Month*. Each month, we are widely engaging congregations and individual Unitarian Universalists through robust action campaigns focused on accomplishing our legislative objectives. October's action, stimulating local media about Iran, is attached to give you a sense of what we mean.
- We have also provided our social justice calendar, which lays out key dates for our year and also names the actions for each month. These are also available online, and have been sent out in the congregational mailing.
- We are promoting congregational Voter Registration and Get out the Vote Campaign resources. These are available online. The UU Funding Panel is making special, no-hassle, grants for this purpose. We have created a 12 page resource entitled Faithful Democracy.
- We are working closely with the UUSC to be sure that we do not duplicate each others efforts, and so that all of our work is mutually enhancing.

2. Strengthening our Congregations:

- Twelve congregations and one cluster are currently scheduled for Social Justice Empowerment workshops. The schedule is attached here. Facilitators of this program gathered in August to build their skills and knowledge.
- We have updated The Real Rules, a resource for congregations about IRS guidelines especially in campaign seasons.
- To date, 256 congregations have participated in the Study Action Issue about peacemaking, and we have raised our goal from the 25% participation we had hoped for to a more ambitious 30% participation.
- We are resourcing the congregations engaged in congregationally based community organizing (CBCO) through creating resources, building a strong supportive Ministers Council, and deploying stellar volunteer Fred Seidl for many site visits.
- We are resourcing congregations on our priority issues via listservs, the website, and distribution of hard copies of materials. More details follow in the issue briefings below.
- Our staff continue to lead workshops, services, and presentations at congregations, districts, and national meetings. We are active in many interfaith organizations and coalitions, providing leadership in many.

3. Supporting the UUA's four Public Witness Priorities

Economic and Racial Justice

- **Immigration:** General Assembly's well attended rally launched our year well on this issue. More than 650 people attended and more than 550 signed our petition to support HR 1176, the Child Citizen Protection Act. The signatures were presented on Capitol Hill by staff. 184 people emailed their representatives. We communicate via the UU immigration news list, which has 275 subscribers. 10 congregations and 2 UU organizations have now signed onto the New Sanctuary Movement Pledge (see attached flyer).
- **\$10 in 2010:** Minimum wage campaign: We continue to work with the Let Justice Roll coalition, as does the UU Service Committee. We encourage congregations to host a Living Wage Day in January.
- **Gulf Coast:** 167 people now subscribe to the Gulf Coast Update to share news, resources and action alerts. We have signed onto a number of initiatives to rebuild the Gulf Coast. We are working closely with the UUSC on this.

Gender and Sexual Justice

- We hosted another successful Sexuality Education and Advocacy Training (SEAT) last March, and have begun working on next year's. The Union for Reform Judaism has joined the UCC, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and us, for this collaboration which we launched several years back.
- We are supporting congregations in Florida and California who are fighting state ballot initiatives. State advocacy groups in both of these states make this work much more effective.
- We are asking the Presidential candidates to support BGLT people, especially in our military. Our staff has worked closely with the Don't Ask Don't Tell hearings.

International Justice and Peacemaking:

- **Iran:** We have joined the Campaign for A New American Policy, a bipartisan coalition with the goal of preventing war with Iran and recreating a foreign policy based on diplomacy.
- **Iraq:** The office continues to work with the Friends Committee on National Legislation to promote swiftly ending the war.
- **Global HIV/ AIDS:** The office worked successfully to eliminate the 1/3rd abstinence earmark in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).
- **Darfur:** We have partnered with UUSC to promote the Tents of Hope for Darfur Campaign as the September action of the month.

Environmental Justice

- We are not well staffed in this arena, so have been devoted mainly to establishing and strengthening partnerships. We are working closely with UU Ministry for the Earth. We have created an environmental justice newsletter. We will be building on past Earth Day projects to have impact this year.

Social Justice Empowerment Workshops 2007 – 2009

2007 – 2008

Oct. 26-27	UU Church of San Mateo, CA
Feb 1-2	First Unitarian Universalist Church of Rochester, MN
Feb. 8-10	Second Unitarian Church, Omaha, NE
Feb 29-Mar 1	UU Church of Elgin, IL
March 7-8	NC Cluster: Eno River Fellowship in Durham, Raleigh Fellowship & Community Church Chapel Hill
March 7-8	First Parish UU Canton, MA
March 21-22	First UU Society of San Francisco, CA
May 30-31	UU Congregation of Atlanta, GA

2008 – 2009 to date

Oct 10-11	First Unitarian in Des Moines, IA
Nov 1-2	Quimper UU Fellowship, Port Townsend, WA
Nov 7-8	UU Church in Eugene, Eugene OR
Jan 9-11	Cedar Lane UU Congregation in Bethesda, MD
Feb 28	UU Congregation of Boise, ID

New Sanctuary Movement Pledge UU Congregations & Organizations

Congregations

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix, AZ (Social Action Committee)
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church, Canoga Park, CA
Unitarian Universalist Church of Long Beach, Long Beach, CA
First Unitarian Church of LA, Los Angeles, CA
Conejo Valley UU Fellowship, Thousand Oaks, CA
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, Danbury, CT
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Miami, Miami, FL
Arlington Street Church, Boston, MA
Unitarian Church of Montclair, Montclair, NJ
First Unitarian Church of Portland, OR

Organizations

Southern California Unit of Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

The Channing-Murray Foundation Unitarian-Universalist Campus Ministry,
University of Illinois

Fall 2008 Travel Schedules

The Rev. Meg A. Riley Director, Advocacy and Witness Programs

September

8		Return from Sabbatical!
9-12	Boston, MA Essex, MA	Budget Meeting and Leadership Council Retreat
16-19	Washington, DC	Meetings with UUA staff, interfaith partners, Planning for convocation on UU Justice Ministry
30-Oct. 2	Boston, MA	Marketing and Public Witness meetings, Leadership Council, International Advisory Council

October

11-17	Washington, DC	Meetings with UUA staff, interfaith partners, Planning for convocation on UU Justice Ministry
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November

9	River Falls, WI	Preach
14-16	Marine on St. Croix, MN	Emerging Leaders Conference Interfaith gathering to mentor seminarians in justice work
17-20	Washington, DC Manhasset, New York	Meetings with UUA staff, Veatch board, interfaith partners

December

2-4	Boston, MA	Public Witness, Leadership Council meetings
8-10	Washington, DC	UUA staff, interfaith partners

January

6-8	Boston, MA	Leadership Council and Public Witness meetings
14-30	Washington, DC	Faith in Public Life Board meeting, Staff and interfaith Partner meetings, preparation and implementation of Convocation on UU Justice Ministry

Washington Office for Advocacy

Adam Gerhardstein, Acting Director
Kat Liu, Assistant Director
Grace Garner, Lisa Swanson, and Alex Winnett

October

25	Philadelphia, PA	Alliance for Racial Justice Conference (Kat)
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December

3-5	Chicago, IL	Midwest Academy Training (Adam)
12-14	Dallas, TX	Regional Peacemaking Program (Alex)

Kathy Sreedhar, Director – UUHIP

September

17-22 Boston, MA Meetings with UUA staff/funders

October

1-3 Boston, MA International Resources Group Meeting

Rev. Eric Cherry, Director – UUA Office of International Resources

October

12 Melrose, MA Melrose UU Church – leading worship and workshop

November

6-23 President Sinkford's Africa journey

Susan Leslie, Director – Office for Congregational Advocacy & Witness

September

15 Boston, MA UUA Committee on Socially Responsible Investing

October

29 Washington, DC UUA Washington Office for Advocacy

30 Washington, DC Interreligious Organizing Initiative

December

3-5 Chicago, IL Midwest Academy Organizing Training, Cenacle Retreat Center

8-9 Chicago, IL Interfaith Worker Justice Board Meeting, Cenacle Retreat Center