

Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation Annual Report to the UUA - 2021

Foundational Shifts

Founded in 1963 through consolidation of Unitarian and Universalist women's organizations, the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation has undertaken three foundational shifts in the last year:

1. **Clarity regarding merger of the UUWF and Unitarian Universalist Women and Religion.** At General Assembly last year, we told you that we were in the final stages of a likely merger with UU Women and Religion. After GA, those final stages proved to lead us away from, rather than towards, a merger. During this last phase of discernment, we concluded that a merger would not serve either organization well at this time. UUWF and UUW&R's organizational relationship to each other have been very separate at times, and other times very friendly and collaborative. This time we part as friends and are open to future collaborations.
2. **Staffing and Theory of Change.** The UUWF hired an Interim Executive Director, Ann Wiesner, to help position us for a period of higher activity and growth. We are excited and energized by our new **Mission and Theory of Change**:

UUWF builds covenantal relationships among UU women that equip us all to be better co-conspirators and allies in the movement for collective liberation. We do this by:

1. Learning and Building Relationships

- *Learning about white supremacist patriarchy and how to dismantle it;*
- *Learning from woman/femme-identifying leaders, visionaries, and organizers of color;*
- *Building relationships within and beyond the UU faith, in service of joining and expanding an anti-racist, pro-woman agenda*

2. Engaging Others in Learning *through training, consciousness-raising, and other activities that are undertaken **with**, not **for**, women*

3. Connecting people to action and activism *through our relationships with partners and allies.*

And our **Covenantal Principles**

- Vulnerability and Authenticity
 - Mutual Accountability
 - Trust-Building
 - Curiosity
 - Responsiveness
 - Love
 - Deep listening
 - Humility
3. **Expanding opportunities to participate.** UUWF has taken several steps to move into a period of expansive growth. Most notably, we have chosen to discontinue being a membership organization. We view this as an expression of our commitment to equitable governance practices and a rejection of the notion that people must “pay to play.” We are also in the process of expanding our Board and plan to diversify our Board makeup as we grow. Finally, we have begun testing ideas for programming that help UU women to connect and grow as activists and allies, and are exploring models for rolling out this programming in the coming 12-18 months.

Program Updates

The UUWF continued some of our traditional programming over the last year, including:

- **Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley Scholarship:** This scholarship, established in 2009 in honor of the Rev. Bowens-Wheatley and her commitment to more interracial and intercultural congregations in the UU movement, provides direct financial support to aspirants or candidates to the Unitarian Universalist ministry, or candidates in the UUA’s religious education or music leadership programs, who identify as BIPOC women. This year’s recipients were **Jamili Omar, Cassandra Montenegro, and Elizabeth Valencia-Gutierrez.**
- **Clara Barton Sisterhood:** The purpose of the Clara Barton Sisterhood is to recognize and celebrate elder women in our UU world. We inducted 12 new members into the Clara Barton Sisterhood this year.
- **Justice for Women and Girls Sermon Award:** This year, the Rev. Anthony Makar received this honor for his sermon “Voices that Most Need to be Heard.”
- **Annual UUWF Breakfast:** The 2020 annual Breakfast, which was held virtually, hosted 210 UUs and we are eager to top that number on June 23rd!

- **Clara Barton Gender Justice Associateship:** This endowed Associateship is managed by the UUA and focuses on organizing and activating UUs for gender justice. The positions was held this fiscal year by Adrian Ballou, working under the leadership of Michael Crumpler.
- **Coalition Partnerships:** UUWF joins its national partners in calling for policies that support women and girls. This year, the UUWF has proudly signed on to support the [Abortion is Healthcare Everywhere Act](#). Originally introduced in summer 2020 and reintroduced to the new Congress on International Women's Day 2021, the bill would repeal the racist, over-controlling Helms Amendment.

The Helms Amendment (to the 1973 Foreign Assistance Act) prohibits international assistance funds from being used “for the performance of abortion as a method of family planning” and has been implemented as a complete ban on the use of U.S. assistance funds for abortion care. The accompanying policy, known as the Global Gag Rule, was rescinded by the Biden administration in January. Because it could be reapplied by a future administration, there is a parallel piece of legislation to ensure that other presidents cannot re-introduce the Global Health, Empowerment and Rights (HER) Act.

- Each year, the UUWF allocates funds simply to give as gifts, in case we come across a project that doesn't fit within the parameters of our grants that we still feel needs support. This year we gave a gift to the **Sanctuary and Resistance Immigrant Fund** of First Universalist Church in Minneapolis

For 2021, we have decided to pause the following programs to make space for discernment and assessment of how our programming can align with our new mission

- **Margaret Fuller Grants:** The **Margaret Fuller Grants program** has supported Unitarian Universalist women in scholarly, prophetic, and innovative exploration of religious feminisms. in 2020, the UUWF funded Quiyamah Rahman's ***Speaking Our Stories and Telling Our Truths: Black Unitarian Universalist Women and Girls Website Project*** and the curriculum ***Dreamers, Devisers, Doers: Women Transforming Themselves and the World*** by Elizabeth Cogliati.
- **Equity and Justice Grants:** This grants program enabled us to fund the Peer Sexuality Education program Rise: Healthy for Life in Tennessee for their second year, helping them adapt to a new format for teaching peer counseling online due to the pandemic closings of schools.

People

We've said our goodbyes and hellos from a distance this year, but that makes them no less important to us:

Volunteer bookkeeper and former Board member Sue Boone wrapped up her many years of service to UUWF this spring. We are so grateful for her support.

Our long-time UUWF Executive Administrator Ellen Spencer passed away in January 2021.

We have welcomed professional bookkeeper Candace Falk onto our team. We will be working with her in a contractual capacity.

We are looking forward to the ongoing work of equipping UUs to be better co-conspirators and allies in the movement for collective liberation.