



## Report from the UU Women's Federation: GA 2015

The UU Women's Federation remains committed to its mission of advancing justice for women and girls and promoting their spiritual growth. This past year has seen many changes and we are busily working on new ways of accomplishing our priorities. Each Fall we have set priorities for the year ahead. This year our most pressing priorities are (in no particular order):

1. To ramp up our focus on our social media presence on [Facebook](#) and through our weekly [blog](#) and our [website](#). We are heartened by the nearly 3,000 women (and men) who we can reach via e-mail, in addition to our other platforms. We are seeing an increase in traffic and a healthy and active response to the weekly [blog](#) of Rev. Marti Keller, our affiliated minister. She has been keeping us informed about current issues that affect women such as the continuing erosion of reproductive rights and access to this health care; economic and racial inequities; and campus rape culture.

We recently posted a [survey](#) asking for feedback from our women constituents and other interested persons about what they see as the most important issues facing women today. We want to compare these contemporary results to those from a survey we conducted in 2004 asking similar questions. In addition, we are asking women in UU congregations to let us know if their ministers are regularly addressing issues of interest to women in their sermons and other avenues. We invite you to attend our workshop at GA "BoldSpiritedness" to find out more about the results of our survey and our new initiative to affirm and support prophetic witness and work around gender inequality.

2. To seek out prominent and remarkable UU women from all generations with wide access to our movement and its various activities to assist us in discovering worthy projects that we can commission and fund. We are interested in contacting women from different age groups who might either be interested in creating a project themselves or who might know other women or groups that could benefit from our financial support while designing projects that serve our mission. We encourage women everywhere to let us know of their interest in becoming an "honorary advisor" to the UUWF Board in this way.
3. To continue providing funding for projects and activities that serve its mission. This year, we have chosen to launch a worthy project which has also been partially funded by the UUA. This project, the New Prophetic Sisterhood, is being spearheaded by Rev. Marti Keller (*pictured*) and



Rev. Beth Dana (*pictured*). Its purpose is to seek out at least 100 UU women ministers to form a New Prophetic Sisterhood dedicated to more emphatically leveraging their parish and community ministry roles on behalf of justice, equity and the spiritual growth of women and girls.



Our Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley Scholarship Fund – which provides scholarship dollars for the training of women of color who are seeking professional credentials within UU – received no applications this past year. The board is in discussion about this, with the twin goals of developing plans to promote the program more vigorously and of strengthening its relevance to the work of the late Rev. Bowens-Wheatley, in whose honor the program was founded.

4. To extend ourselves outward by more intentionally partnering with other women's groups such as the Religious Council for Reproductive Choice, the Religious Institute, SisterSong, UUWomen and Religion, and UU History and Heritage Society. We affirm that, in developing stronger networks of women's groups, we might be able to widen our impact on women's issues and perhaps even forestall some of the more recent moves of our U.S. Congress and the individual states to water down or remove protections which have been hard-won over the decades. Advocacy has become a stronger element in our work, thanks to the continuing efforts of our affiliated minister, Rev. Marti Keller. We have signed on to a number of petitions and/or letters and amicus briefs in this past year – you can find details about these on our [website](#).
5. To continue to honor older women in our UU congregations with our Clara Barton Sisterhood program. Women over 80 years of age can be nominated by any person in their congregation to join this proud group of women who, in their lives, have served our UUWF mission of advancing justice and encouraging the spiritual lives of women and girls. This year we congratulate and honor the following women for their efforts:

- Phyllis Belk, *honored by the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Wyoming Valley*
- Helen Ellenbecker (*pictured*), *honored by the Association of Universalist Women, AUW, of First Universalist Church, Minneapolis, MN*
- Olga DeGouttes and Mary-Ellan Holst, *honored by the Women's Alliance of the Unitarian Church of All Souls, New York, NY*
- Barbara Goggins and Phyllis Lamore, *honored by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Pensacola, FL*



As our board has met over the last year or two, we have become aware that things are changing out there. There are younger, active women who are interested in the new paradigm around gender issues, including intersectionality, and more involvement of male allies in this work. We are welcoming and inviting a new wave of women who bring energy and understanding of the new

developments in the way women of color; women with different sexual and/or gender identifications; women with economic barriers; older women with a disappearing social safety net; and all women with reproductive health concerns or general health concerns to come to the table. All of us must be in the service of bold work on behalf of women and girls.

Lastly, we have announced the retirement of our executive administrator, Ellen Spencer (*pictured*), who worked hard and unstintingly for us for nearly 37 years. She has certainly earned her retirement and we wish her well in her travels (which she loves) and in all of her activities, including being Chief Usher at the Arlington Street UU Congregation in Boston, which she calls home. We have found a skilled and personable administrative presence in Dana Robb (*pictured*), who works out of Milwaukee with her business, Barefoot Marketing. Dana's company provides administrative support to a number of non-profit organizations and has also been the UUWF's graphic designer for many years. We welcome her to the UUWF in her increased capacity.



We look forward to the future, knowing that while there are many current issues that take people's attention (climate change, racial violence, strife in the Middle-East, etc.) opposing sexism and the restriction of women's rights must remain a high priority for all.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kirstie Lewis".

Kirstie Lewis, Ph.D.  
UUWF President

