

the Communicator

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UUWF Mission: Transforming Thought \$2.00/issue September/October 1993

Lay Leaders and Ministers as Partners: New Ways of Doing Ministry

by Barbara Child
Member, UUA Women and Religion Committee

The Committee's Study

The UUA Continental Women and Religion Committee has undertaken a major project this year of studying ministerial authority and the empowerment of the laity. Based on the committee's charge to implement the 1977 Women and Religion Resolution, and on the UUA's Sexism Audit, the study has found some innovative and notably effective programs underway in UU congregations. These programs signal significant change in how the denomination conceives of and practices ministry.

To launch the study, Marilyn Gentile, committee chair, wrote to the president of every North American UU congregation and to some other individuals known to have a special interest in lay ministry. The letter asked for responses to the following questions:

- What is your definition of lay ministry? Shared ministry? Shared leadership? Other related terms?
- What are examples of shared ministry programs in your congregation?
- What is your philosophy behind these programs?
- What are their benefits? Their drawbacks?
- What is the future direction of these programs?

Defining Terms

The responses showed considerable variation in people's use of terms to describe different forms of ministry. In the interest of common understanding, the committee adopted the most common definitions of key terms:

- *Ministry*: teaching, nurturing, and articulating religious values; putting values into action in the church and world; caring for the well being of others; and conducting religious ceremonies.
- *Team ministry*: two or more clergypersons ministering together.
- *Co-ministry*: team ministry in which two or more clergypersons share one position.

- *Lay ministry*: ministry by lay persons.
- *Shared ministry*: clergy and lay persons ministering together.

Philosophies about Shared Ministry

Thinking about shared ministry means thinking about who does what in a congregation. It also means thinking about what activities are regarded as ministry and about how ministry and leadership differ, if they do. Is social justice work a form of ministry? Is directing the choir a form of ministry? What about serving as an officer, a member of the board of trustees, a committee chair, or a consultant on conflict management? In other words, where is the line between ministry and leadership? Where is the line between ministry and service? What does it mean, after all, to be a servant-leader?

Shared ministry in practice in our congregations ranges from the minimal participation of lay persons as "helpers" or substitutes when the minister is away to formal programs involving titled lay positions, training, and accreditation. Those who favor shared ministry maintain that we are all called to share our gifts and serve one another. They speak of broad participation as healthy, and of hierarchical structure as unhealthy. They believe that a major role of the clergy is to teach lay people how to minister. They recognize both (1) that the congregation members have a myriad of skills that no one person could embody alone, and (2) that no one else has the professional skill of the clergyperson.

continued on page 4

Special Double Issue

Inside this Issue

| | |
|-------|--|
| 3 | A Feminist "Coming of Age" |
| 7 | Feminist Theology Awards |
| 8 | Crossroads: Calendar of Events |
| 10 | GA '93: A Kaleidoscope of Perspectives |
| 12-13 | WomanSpace Registration |

UU Flood Relief Seeks Support

The UUA and the UU Service Committee have established an emergency fund for flood relief in the Midwest. The fund was announced in late July by UUA President John Buehrens and UUSC Executive Director Richard Scobie. In a joint letter sent to congregations, active ministers, and others in the UU community, they explained:

"As the waters begin to recede and the full scale of the damage is assessed, our staffs, working together, are in close contact with churches and community groups in the area in order to determine how best to be of assistance.

"We urge you to bring this appeal to the attention of your congregation through any and all means, asking that people who wish to respond to this emergency with financial assistance to send checks to UU Flood Relief, c/o UUSC, 130 Prospect Street, Cambridge, MA 02139. Charlie Zoeller of UUSC will serve as staff coordinator of this effort.

"Funds will be distributed by a UUA/UUSC task force to Unitarian Universalist organizations as they develop in the area of impact, and to other effective organizations providing direct assistance. Priority will be given to programs addressing the needs of the most vulnerable victims of the flooding.

"Individuals interested in information about possible volunteer opportunities should contact the UU Service Committee.

"We hope that Unitarian Universalist will respond to this crisis with the same generosity with which they met the destruction of Hurricane Andrew and the urban disturbances in Los Angeles."

the Communicator

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Editorial Team: Peg Carlson, Salem, Wis.; Barbara Child, Berkeley, Calif.; Arlene Johnson, Tulsa, Okla.; Ellen Spencer, Boston, Mass.; Judy Williams, Houston, Texas.

The Editorial Team welcomes your submissions to *the Communicator*. Send them, along with any other correspondence relating to our publication to: *the Communicator*, UU Women's Federation, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108; (617) 742-2100, x692.

Rise Up Update

The time when many of us will be sitting in circles and exploring woman-honoring, earth-based spiritualities from around the globe is drawing closer. The training of leaders for the UUWF's curriculum, "Rise Up and Call Her Name: A Woman Honoring Journey into Global Earth-based Spiritualities" has taken place this summer and fall and will be completed before the year is over. Teams of leaders from almost all of the UUA districts have volunteered to come to one of the two training sessions — in Milwaukee, Wis., in September and Beaumont, Calif. in October. After their own training, they will schedule district training sessions for facilitators for the curriculum in local churches.

Pat White, Harvard, Mass., a training coordinator along with Mairi Maeks of the UUWF Boston office, reports that the response from the districts has been enthusiastic and many wonderful, competent women will receive this training. In addition, there seems to be a high level of cooperation and collaboration at the district level, which will insure that the program, so long awaited, will be available to all who want to share the experience of the multi-cultural roots of women's spirituality.

Watch for more news of "Rise Up" in *the Communicator* or in your district newsletter.

Continental UUWF Administrative Board

The following women were installed as members of the board for 1993-95 at the UUWF Biennial in June in Charlotte, N.C.:

Kay Aler-Maida, President, Brooklyn, N.Y.; Arlene Johnson, Vice President, Tulsa, Okla.; Dee Ann Dain, Treasurer, Dallas, Texas; Judy Williams, Secretary, Houston, Texas; the Rev. Elinor Artman, Cincinnati, Ohio; Sally Graves, Seattle, Wash.; Susan Haskin, San Diego, Calif.; Beth Hone, Lumsden, Saskatchewan; Janet Nortrom, Shorewood, Wis.; Qiyamah Rahman, Atlanta, Ga.; Frances Sebuabey, Washington, D.C.; Nada Velimirovic, Palo Alto, Calif.

1993-95 Nominating Committee

The names of those elected to the UUWF Nominating Committee for 1993-95 were also announced at Biennial. They are: Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley, Washington, D.C.; Peg Carlson, Salem, Wis.; Katie Stein Sather, Lacombe, Alberta; and Nancy S. Young, Tampa, Fla. In accordance with the UUWF bylaws, the 1991-93 Nominating Committee elected one of its members, Betsy McCall, Moscow, Idaho, to serve a second term.

Be Nobody's Darling: Our Experience of a Feminist "Coming of Age"

Editor's Note: The following article relates the experience of Margaret Merrifield with the "Coming of Age Program," which was developed by the Shawnee Mission Unitarian Society of Shawnee Mission, Kan. Designed for young people who are interested in learning more about Unitarian Universalism and their own religious beliefs, this is an elective program for youth from the ages of 12 to 14. An adult church member, serving as mentor, guides the young person through service programs within the church, service in the larger community, and discussion with members about religious beliefs, societal responsibilities, and personal relationships. Upon completion of the program, the student is honored at a graduation ceremony and appropriate festivities. The curriculum is described in detail in a publication available from the UUA Bookstore. Ask for Order #1014. The price is \$7.95.

by Susan Merrifield and Dorothy Rogers
Boston, Mass.

"Through the 'Coming of Age' process, I have learned a great deal...By confirming a belief in liberal religion, I must stand behind my words, and not remain quiet when I hear the old remark that has become so familiar to me: 'So, you don't believe in much; Unitarians don't really have a religion.'" — Margaret Merrifield

Grapppling with this common misconception of Unitarian Universalism became a focal point of Margaret's struggle to define her identity and beliefs as she engaged in the year-long "Coming of Age" process. During this time, "Mugsy" worked closely with Dorothy, whom she had chosen as her mentor, to complete a number of requirements, including volunteer service, exploring religious literature and worship, and interviewing religious leaders. As the words Margaret speaks above make clear, often Unitarian Universalism is perceived to be a religion without faith. Yet at 14 years of age, she was able to say: "I discovered what it means to say, 'I am a Unitarian Universalist.' To state this simple sentence, I must not be afraid to explore and respect my inner feelings, speak up against unjust actions, and not to worry about putting my pride on the line."

As feminists, working with Mugsy and helping her through her "Coming of Age" was particularly inspiring. The process culminated in a ceremony which itself was rich with feminist convictions. "Be Nobody's Darling" — the Alice Walker poem which Margaret selected to be among the readings in her ceremony — in essence grew to be the theme of the service. Mother, father, grandparents, godmother, minister, and mentor each offered their words of wisdom for the challenges she will face and the lure of "becoming a darling" in any number of ways, rather than asserting herself and affirming who she is and is to become.

If we had an "agenda," it was this: simply to provide



Bruce Roberts photo

Coming of Age

Margaret Merrifield (center of top row, holding book) is shown with other participants in her "Coming of Age" celebration last fall at the Arlington Street Church, Boston, Mass.

Margaret with the support and encouragement that we did not have as we "came of age"...

Resources. We gave Mugsy books to read, books about spirituality as well as about women leaders. Among them was UUWF's *Roots of Our Strength*, about Unitarian and Universalist women who paved their own way rather than wait to be assigned a role by society. Also among this literature was Alice Walker's *Revolutionary Petunias*, which contained the poem that Margaret ultimately took as her theme.

Encouragement. On visits to the Arlington Street Church/Dignity Friday Night Supper Program to feed the homeless, on interviews with religious leaders, and in her readings, either one of us or her dad would accompany her or talk over questions and concerns. We let her know there was a helping hand to guide her whenever she felt she needed it, that she didn't have to do it all alone.

Role Models. We sought out people to act as role models through this process. We were grateful to witness such support from those she interviewed: Hildred Cyr, member of Arlington Street Church in Boston and social activist; Bill Gardiner, Director of Social Justice at the UUA; Elea Kemler, Harvard Divinity student and intern at First and Second Church in Boston; Mairi Maeks, executive director of UUWF; Phyllis Rickter, former president of UUWF; and Judith Carpenter, chaplain at Dana Hall School in Wellesley, Mass. There are also countless others — teachers, neighbors, family, and friends who helped and encouraged Mugsy along the way.

Perhaps the greatest mark of success of this program, however, was the way in which it drew a community of women together in ritualizing the process by which Margaret made the transition from a girl into a woman. While

continued on page 6

■ Lay Leaders and Ministry, continued from page 1

Those who are skeptical about shared ministry stress that even though all may have the capacity to minister, only ordained ministers have the training and developed talents to do so effectively. Some worry about the "quality control" of lay ministry, mentioning "amateurish" Sunday services and incompetent handling of other ministerial functions. They wonder whether lay people understand the boundaries that differentiate ministering from other relationships. Some who otherwise compliment shared ministry nonetheless worry about skilled and committed volunteers burning out or spreading themselves too thin.

Models of Shared Ministry

The Women and Religion Committee's study uncovered numerous models of shared ministry. However various they are, their success appears to depend on four common components, identified by Ginny Kushnick of Huntington, N.Y., as follows:

- Commitment to common goals.
- Communication.
- Compromise.
- Appreciation of each person's talents.

Some models were described at a workshop sponsored by the Women and Religion Committee at General Assembly last June.

Canadian Chaplaincy. Donna Morrison-Reed, who co-ministers with her husband, Mark, in Toronto, described the Canadian chaplaincy program. Lay chaplains perform marriages, memorial services, and other ceremonial rites under the supervision of the board of trustees of a congregation. The board hires, evaluates, and renews its chaplains. The Canadian Unitarian Council licenses chaplains and establishes guidelines and training requirements. Personal characteristics are regarded as more important than professional background. Chaplains contribute greatly to outreach, as they perform rites for people who are not Unitarian Universalists.

The Commitment to Fellowship in Huntington, N.Y. Paul Beedle described the commitment to shared leadership in his congregation, which called their first minister 30 years ago but intentionally continue to call themselves the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Huntington. Their bylaws describe the minister and board as co-spiritual leaders. Whenever they undertake a major project, such as when they prepared to become a "welcoming congregation," they have "spiritual directions" meetings to hear from all who wish to speak.

Paul Beedle assessed the challenges of shared ministry as logistical and the benefits as spiritual. He stressed that undertaking shared ministry requires an intentional pro-

cess to educate the congregation about how to adjust its culture. The ultimate benefits, he said, are a happy minister and a vital congregation.

The Oakland, Calif., Associates Programs. Bob Hood described the First Unitarian Church of Oakland's Associates Programs, which are based on the philosophy: "The work is worthy, and so are the workers." Two of the four pro-

grams are solidly established. Oakland's 12 Worship Associates plan all the Sunday services along with the co-ministers. People apply to be Worship Associates, and there are always more applicants than slots. Pastoral Associates do not apply. They are asked to

serve as such by the Ministerial Relations Committee. Presently there are seven. They attend the sick and dying and others in crisis.

Two more Associates Programs are nascent. Teaching Associates work in the Religious Education Program. Social Justice Associates work on projects of their own choosing, applying in groups of at least four. Oakland's programs reflect the understanding that the entire congregation owns and is responsible for church life.

When someone in the workshop audience said that in her congregation it was impossible to garner enough committed volunteers for such ambitious programs, Bob Hood responded that if you make the work important, treat it with respect, and validate the people who do it, volunteers abound.

Other audience members mentioned other variations on the shared ministry theme. For example, in one congregation lay ministers, chosen by the president, minister to clusters of committees. In another, Wednesday evening chapels are led by congregation members.

Looking Ahead

More shared ministry is clearly ahead for more congregations. The more a congregation grows, the more shared the ministry becomes. The more a congregation values shared ministry, the more it recognizes the need for training, structured programs, and formal recognition.

The Women and Religion Committee is exploring possibilities for a packet of resource materials on model programs and training. Attention will also be given to working with seminaries to train ministerial students on empowering the laity. Those with models or other materials to share may send a one- or two-page description to Laila Ibrahim, a member of the committee, at 2125 Alameda Blvd., San Pablo, CA 94806.

While resources are being tapped and materials gathered, congregations might want to consider doing what the Huntington Fellowship did in response to the Women

continued on page 8

...if you make the work important, treat it with respect, and validate the people who do it, volunteers abound.

My Creed

by Kimberly Lewis-Major
San Diego, Calif.

Daughter of the Military Fortress. Wife of a Warrior. Rubenesque woman in a world of chiseled bodies. Sole vegetarian in a family. African American in a land of heritage-denying people. Writer among readers. College-educated amid the seekers of greater knowledge. Third-generation, native Californian in a region of folks from some place else. I am all these things and more.

I am constantly discovering myself and who I think I am, both within and outside this faith. Right now, I am in a place where I am looking at where I can use my talents and still feel a purpose to the universe. So in a sense, I'm keenly aware of how similar I am to those around me, particularly to those in my church.

I consider myself primarily a creative person — a writer — which is what I do for a living. It's quite apparent that there are a *lot* of creative types, not just in my congregation but within the whole denomination. We have writers, teachers and other educators, healers of both allopathic and homeopathic medicine, scientists, artists, sculptors and many more talented spirits.

When I began attending a Unitarian Universalist church, I was attracted by the creativity of adult religious education courses offered, such as "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven." Actually, an adult religious education course brought me to this fellowship. It was called, "How to Open the Door, the African American Experience in Unitarian Universalism." It really opened my eyes to spirituality after decades of searching for a religious home that I felt comfortable with. I can not tell you how many denominations I've visited that proselytized their brand of salvation which, unfortunately, did not fit at all with my own idea of how things can and ought to be!

In this faith that I discovered was a group of people very like-minded and committed to helping others and sharing fellowship with *anyone*. I found my first visit to the church humorous because I saw just *how* tolerant UUs were to worship with. My impression at that first Sunday worship service was quite different than what past experiences had taught me was "appropriate" for a worship service.

Our religious education minister began the sermon with Native American storytelling that was poignant and timely. The music selection was not gospel music or a solemn hymn but a '60s tune strummed on acoustic guitars by an eclectic group of congregants. This was new! It was weird. But it was also *so* inviting.

After the service, total strangers came and greeted me, welcoming me to the church. Soon after, I began to get involved. And one of the reasons that I began to get in-

involved was because for all the welcomes and the occasional ethnic stories shared at services, there was little physical presence of racially ethnic people in the congregation. That disturbed me. I didn't know how to address my ambivalent feelings about a faith that welcomed me, yet did not represent the diversity it espouses.

Being an avid reader, I raided the church bookstore for works about or by UUs for some background on this denominational phenomenon. I was determined to refute the

adage I repeatedly heard some black leaders talk about — that Sunday mornings were the most segregated hours in America. I read a book by an African American Unitarian Universalist minister, Mark Morrison-

Reed, who wrote *Blacks in a White Denomination* and who later went on to write the curriculum that drew me to the Unitarian Universalist faith in the first place.

I learned about the Universalist and Unitarian merger in the 1960s and how each faith began and flourished before that union. I learned that like the Quakers during slavery in America, Unitarians were also committed abolitionists, who championed the end to slavery. Unitarian Universalists were also some of the people who drafted our Constitution and began our government as we know it today. I find it also ironic that, historically, UUs like Thomas Jefferson also contributed and benefited from slavery of my ancestors in this country.

But UUs began to evolve and become enlightened as a few African American ministers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries joined the faith. But those ministers seemed to have a hard time getting consistent funding and support from their Boston brethren. Those long-ago UU congregations were glad to have black UUs, but not entirely crazy to have them sit among them to desegregate their churches.

Why do I mention this not-so-glorious UU history? It's important to who I am in this denomination and it helps keep my ambivalent feelings in perspective. Because I think this faith also has ambivalent feelings about ethnic identity, classism, and racial inclusiveness. One of the ways I deal with this ambivalence in myself and the denomination is by working with a unique group, the Beyond Racism Task Force of the Social Responsibility Service Committee which was started about four years ago at the First Unitarian Church of San Diego by one of our ministers, Tom Owen-Towle, and other committed people.

Social justice and volunteerism are ideals that I strongly believe in. They are not just part of my credo, they are who I am and a part of everything that I do. My parents instilled that in all of their daughters. To me, religiosity, if you will, is improving my environment around me not to suit me necessarily, but to better things universally. I think

continued on page 6

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• *My Creed, continued from page 5*

that's what I have in common with other UUs. I think that is where some of the problem lies, particularly as we are finally acknowledging the "browning" of the work force in this country, is that we should not improve our environment, the welfare of the animals and our neighbor's plight by *our* individual and biased standards. I think everyone wants to be acknowledged for their differentness as well as any similarities.

In the task force, we have tried to bring forth people's similarities and differences and talk about how we feel about them. It is both a challenge and a terrific growth experience for me as well as the congregation, I think, to have this group's presence. We have developed and sponsored programs, workshops and conferences about racism and diversity. It also includes our ideas about our individual roles in our country's biased and racist institutions, which everybody either benefits from or are harmed by.

But for me, one of the most stressful experiences that I endured, was responding to UUs about the rioting in Los Angeles after the acquittal of police officers for beating motorist Rodney King.

I was feeling a lot of things at that time, as I was sure most people were, particularly people of color. It was one time that I felt strangely alienated from my white UU friends who wanted to have intellectual discourse about police brutality or what I thought about the verdict.

They just didn't get it, how I was one raw ball of emotion which was predominantly anger at the violence of the beating, the injustice of the justice system and the crazy havoc of the days that followed. Although San Diego was *not* Los Angeles and did not have any rioting, people in

San Diego were just as agitated as the Angelenos.

To have a meeting to discuss personal feelings about the riots was in order for the church to set up. But it was personal hell for me to endure. I contended with hearing emotional extremes from people and also pleas for intellectual dialogue. Most at the meeting were emotional and angry and frustrated. Some, however, wanted to have some sort of intellectual masturbation about the significance of the looting in the riots.

I think, though, that we were feeling a sense of disbelief *and* resolve to stop the racism in all its forms. I know that this is a tall order and quite frankly, no matter how optimistic I think I am, I don't ever see how racism will ever end. I think it will be a virus that meets final resistance, then will change form so it can eradicate another part of undetecting cells. I would go mad if I sat around and stewed about this forever. I just know that I will die trying to fight something that will continue long after I am gone.

And I hope that when I am asked, "Kim, what do you think?" about a particular topic, it is not to get the "black" answer to a "white" question but a response from *my* perspective. That perspective includes my black experience, vegetarian philosophy, belief in fat acceptance, an awareness of military protocol and multicultural convictions. I will just hope that one day before I go, the world will be just a little brighter, that people will have just a little stronger faith in *all* humanity, and that it will be a better morning.

Editor's note: "My Creed" was a speech originally presented to a meeting of the Pacific Southwest District UUWF in January of this year.

• *Coming of Age, continued from page 3*

modern feminism has freed women from identities based exclusively on relationships with men and children, it has not offered young women a road map to the future. Therefore, many young women have little guidance in defining themselves in non-traditional ways. The "Coming of Age" process provides young women with the chance to create their own odyssey and older women with the opportunity to help them chart their course. As women who came of age under conditions similar to those described by Carol Gilligan, who notes that teenage girls generally put their personalities "underground," we found ourselves not only nurturing Mugsy — not simply giving in the way women have been traditionally encouraged to do — but also nourishing the young girl in each of us who was once rejected, repressed, or ignored. Helping a young woman define herself as a confident, independent young adult has made us proud not just of Margaret's accomplishments, but of our Unitarian Universalist heritage, and yes, even ourselves.

Margaret Merrifield recently completed her freshman year at Dana Hall School in Wellesley, Mass.



Margaret Merrifield

Bruce Roberts photo

Susan Merrifield, Margaret's mother, is an assistant professor of English Education at Lesley College in Cambridge, Mass.

Dorothy Rogers is a doctoral student of philosophy and legal theory at Boston University. She is also a former staff member of UUWF.

Bruce Roberts is Margaret Merrifield's father. Besides taking the photos he also catered her "Coming of Age" celebration.

Feminist Theology Awards

by Anne Olson

Chair, Feminist Theology Awards Selection Committee
with the advice and consultation of Betty Hoskins

In this fifth year of the UUWF's Feminist Theology Awards, no awards were given. Instead, the 1993 FTA celebration at the UUWF Biennial in Charlotte, N.C., honored the awards of past years (there have been 14), supported by the presence of four award recipients: Helene Knox, Nancy Vedder-Shults, Linda Anderson, and Judith Brown Osgood. The Biennial was also the occasion of the first performance of the play for which Linda Anderson received a 1992 FTA: "Judith Sargent Murray: A Woman of Substance," which is based on Murray's writings. And Nancy Vedder-Shults, who also received a '92 FTA for her audiotape, "Chants for the Queen of Heaven," sang her way into our hearts throughout the conference.

Still, feelings did surface around the fact that no FTA grants were awarded this year, feelings that included disappointment and frustration as well as heartfelt thanks for the committee's integrity in acting on its beliefs.

The FTA Selection Committee feels a major commitment to the many women who have trusted us with their hopes, visions and resources. We recognize how vital it is for us to continue to be generous in spirit as we work with limited resources and rigorous criteria: criteria which require that the projects be both scholarly and accessible. The work is both challenging and satisfying because the applications are rich in insights, exciting, and creative — including proposals not just for books, but for projects involving music, art, poetry, and sermons.

The committee was in complete agreement that applications for the 1993 FTAs were different from those of previous years. As we have explained to those who applied, two important questions repeatedly emerge in the FTA selection process: 1) what do we mean by thea/ological; and 2) what is specifically Unitarian Universalist about the proposed project. This year's applicants had more difficulties with these questions than we had seen before. Although we read intriguing approaches from talented women, we found problems in clarity with some and with scope in others.

Reaching the decision not to award any grants in 1993 was difficult. But through it we reaffirmed our commitment to feminist reasoning and feminist process — a process reflective of women working together in a circle. That process asks that we be caring and nurturing in our work

while remaining discerning and faithful to our charge.

To quote from the application, "Consistent with the UUWF Mission Statement and with the UUA Purposes and Principles, we continue to participate in the difficult dialogue of difference, and we search for justice. We seek new understandings and sensibilities as part of our feminist and theological search for truths. We desire generous spirit, in relation to each other's works. We struggle, as we have in the past, to listen to the diverse voices, the varied strands of our denomination, our communities and our society."

As we have explained to those who applied, two important questions repeatedly emerge in the FTA selection process: 1) what do we mean by thea/ological; and 2) what is specifically Unitarian Universalist about the proposed project.

This transformative work is difficult. Lifting up our vision is complicated by the patriarchal world that we live in.

This year is also significant in the life of the FTA Selection Committee because the last members of the original committee, Clare Fischer and Betty Hoskins, chair, have rotated off. They will be missed because of their unique and scholarly contributions to the deliberations of the committee. Clare has brought insight, wisdom, and the perspective of an academic. Betty has brought her scholarly insistence, skill at "catching the sense of the conversation," moving us to clarity and agreement.

Continuing to serve with me on the committee are Roberta Mitchell, Chicago, Ill.; Mary Lou Skinner Ross, Issaquah, Wash.; and Cynthia Grant Tucker, Memphis, Tenn. Beth Hone, Lumsden, Saskatchewan, served as the committee's liaison to the UUWF board for the last two years. New members and a new board liaison will join us in the fall. Betty Hoskins will stay on the committee in an advisory capacity to share her historical memory of the FTA process.

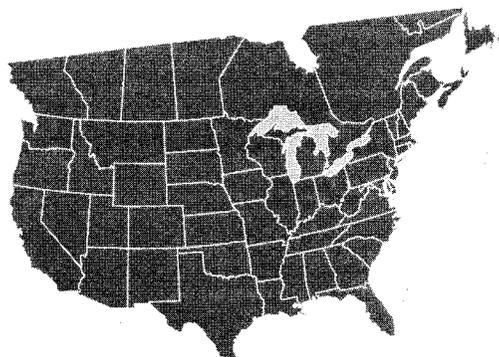
Applications are available from the UUWF office, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108. They were also distributed at General Assembly and the UUWF Biennial. The selection process will begin after January 15, 1994 — the deadline for 1994 award applications. It is not too soon to begin the application process. If you have any questions, please contact me at (404) 634-2919.

Anne Olson, Decatur, Ga., has served on the FTA Selection Committee for two years. A UU laywoman working through churches, district organizations, and the local feminist bookstore in the Atlanta area, Anne was the first Women and Religion chair of the UUA Mid-South District and was a member of the Continental UUWF Board for six years.

Crossroads

A Calendar of Events Across the Continent

Compiled by Peg Carlson
Salem, Wis.



| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| September 29 – October 1 | UU Womenspirit Fall Institute, The Mountain UU Camp, Highlands, N.C. Three tracks focusing on "Harvesting the Spirit." Contact: Katie Moriarity Rubin, (704) 342-3442. |
| October 1-3 | UU Womenspirit Fall Gathering, The Mountain UU Camp, Highland, N.C. "Harvesting the Spirit" with workshops and activities. Contact Sara Dumais, (804) 550-1540. |
| October 2 | Philosofest X, Deerfield, Ill. "Reclaiming the Old Ways: Ways of Knowing: Responding to the Pagans in Our Churches." Papers presented by Carol Graywing and Burton Carley. Contact: Elizabeth MacArthur, (708) 234-2460. |
| October 2-16 | Goddess Tour with Carol Christ. Tour of Goddess and Minoan sites and caves on Crete. Contact: Carol Wilken, (800) 476-8747. |
| October 8-10 | Retreat at the Pines, Florida Women and Religion. "Stitching our Lives Together," facilitated by Marjorie Arnoldi and Marcy Kutash. Contact: Marjorie Arnoldi, (813) 988-0734. |
| October 9-10 | 12th Annual Women & Spirituality Conference, independently sponsored and ecumenical, Mankato, Minn. "Women's Mysteries," with keynote speaker Jean Shinoda Bolen. Contact: Cindy Veldhuisen, (507) 389-2077. |
| October 14-17 | Annual Meeting, Collegium, North Andover, Mass. Papers presented in Theology, Ethics, Feminism, and History. Distinguished Scholar: Thandeka. Contact Neil Gerdes, (312) 753-3196. |
| October 15-17 | Weaving the Web VI, Continental UU Pagan Festival and Convocation, deBeneville Pines, Calif. Theme presenter: Zusuzsanna "Z" Budapest; special guest, Margot Adler. Contact CUUPS Festival, P.O. Box 640, Cambridge, MA 02140. |
| October 20-24 | UUWF's first WomanSpace Retreat, 5-day continental UU women's conference — see pages 11 and 12 of this issue of <i>the Communicator</i> . |
| October 29-31 | Fall Retreat, Central Midwest District UUWF, Lake Geneva, Wis. "Empowerment," with Carolyn McDade. Contact: Helen Johnson, (414) 421-0320. |
| November 12-14 | Annual Gathering, continental Women and Religion District representatives, Boston, Mass. Contact: Susan Stephenson Hefte, (813) 321-8998. |
| November 12-14 | "Transformations" Weekend, Highlands, N.C. "Embracing Our Identity: Women in Alternative Lifestyles" facilitated by Janet Harvey and Cyn Chadwick. A first-annual event at the Mountain, lesbians only. Contact: the Mountain, (704) 526-5838. |

Please let us know of upcoming events in your area. Send information to the UUWF office (Attn: *Communicator*) or call Peg Carlson, (414) 835-4343. Deadline for the November/December issue is September 10.

■ Lay Leaders and Ministry, continued from page 4

and Religion Committee's study questions. Several members of the congregation were invited to write responses. These were circulated and served as the basis for a spiritual directions meeting to discuss the congregational identity and the directions of its shared ministry.

Putting shared ministry on congregations' long-range planning agenda may be an important step in transforming denominational thought about ministry and governance — one more way to bend ladders into circles.

Barbara Child is a member of the Editorial Team for the Communicator. The former Director of Legal Drafting at the University of Florida College of Law, Barbara recently moved to Berkeley, Calif., to begin study for her M. Div. Degree at the Starr King School for the Ministry.

Reclaiming Our Sacred Business

UUWF's 1993 Biennial Convention

by Ellen Spencer
Boston, Mass.

Borrowing the words from a song by Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Empowerment: We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting For" was the theme of UUWF's 1993 Biennial Convention. The 156 registrants — from 26 states, the District of Columbia, and three provinces — met June 22-24 in Charlotte, N.C., just prior to the UUA General Assembly. There they were faced with the challenging task of reclaiming UUWF's sacred business in this 30th anniversary year of the UU Women's Federation.

Juliet Underwood, first president of UUWF, set the historical backdrop for the meeting during the opening session. She told the first of the "power tales" presented during the convention — stories about women claiming power and empowering their sisters. Julie's tale concerned the last minute glitch that nearly prevented the Association of Universalist Women and the Alliance of Unitarian Women from consolidating into UUWF according to the plan they had worked on together for a number of years. On the eve of the 1963 meeting in which they were to formally join, it was discovered that Federal legislation required for the consolidation had not been enacted, although it had been initiated. (The Universalist women's organization was incorporated in the District of Columbia, where legal incorporation must be enabled by an act of Congress. Further legislation was required for the AUW to consolidate with the Alliance.)

Despite that, the women decided to proceed as if the enabling act were passed, knowing that if it weren't enacted before they adjourned they would have to gather together once again from all over the continent to reconvene and satisfy the legalities. They did this because of their faith in each other and so that their work — their sacred business — could go forward.

Of Paradigm Shifts and Chaos

Julie's story was quite relevant to the sacred business at hand. As explained in the opening session, the Biennial's planners wished to conduct the conference in as collaborative, non-hierarchical manner as possible, empowering the membership represented at the meeting to work together to set UUWF goals and priorities for the 1993-95 Biennium. But since UUWF is legally incorporated as a nonprofit organization, the planners faced a number of paradoxes, as summarized in the convention's "Covenants For Community":

"We are an incorporated not-for-profit organization with legal restrictions...yet we wish to open up our ways, to change from these hierarchical ladders into

circles...We require quorums, credentials, and delegates, yet we wish all who choose to be here to join in the discussions and the decisions...We have a Board, officers, staff, an office, yet we wish every UU woman to be empowered and involved in our common goals and actions...We have Rules of Procedure and Robert's Rules of Order, yet we wish to do our work through coalitions and consensus....We want to ensure, with our Rules of Procedure, an orderly convention, yet we know that chaos can be and is creative..."

"Therefore let us think about a Covenant rather than Rules."

The convention adopted the Covenant. Once again, women moved ahead with their work.

The Power Tales

The next day's session began with power tales from five other UU women. Dee Graham, Knoxville, Tenn., recounted stories of mentors and friends who had a memorable impact on her personal and professional life. Barbara Green, Durham, N.C., told a tale of leadership development as embodied in the development of the Womenspirit gatherings in the Thomas Jefferson District. Christine Martell, Orleans, Mass., addressed the area of social justice with her story of the Clothesline Project — itself the telling of the stories of abused women through displays of t-shirts memorializing their personal experiences with violence. The parable offered by Qiyamah Rahman, incoming UUWF board member from Atlanta, Ga., illustrated the empowerment women experience through self help and support groups. And Nancy Young, Tampa, Fla., told of the empowerment women can find in the communal development of worship and rituals.

Sacred Business

Thus inspired, Biennial registrants spent the rest of the morning and afternoon moving between the collective gathering and small groups. Their dialogue provided them first with an opportunity to network about the concerns and programs they are involved with on a local level. In reporting back to the reassembled gathering they made those concerns and programs known to the continental leadership and to those who had worked in other small groups. The goal: identifying for the continental leadership issues and concerns that will help them prioritize UUWF's work during the 1993-95 Biennium.

The result was not intended to be a neat package of instructions for the UUWF's continental programs and activities. Rather, the following summary briefly outlines the

continued on page 16

GA '93: A Kaleidoscope of Perspectives

Edited by Peg Carlson

My sister collects kaleidoscopes. She likes to sit and look through them in the morning with her first cup of coffee. Sometimes she picks the small brass one from New England; sometimes the large plastic one she found out West; other times she likes to look through the tiny one without any special pieces in it, the one that just makes the world look different. She told me that she is surprised that she has so few kaleidoscopes and that she finds that she is choosy. The ones she brings home become a part of her life; they are the ones that speak to her soul.

UUA General Assemblies are like that for me. I find I have a shelf of GAs in my mind's eye. Each is unique, each has spoken to my soul. Like my sister, I examine them in the quiet of my own life, when the whirlwind of the experience is over. I find a myriad of perspectives in each one — so many that it is sometimes hard to describe a GA to someone who did not attend. And the more I look and the more effort I put into it, the more interesting each perspective becomes and the more I want to keep looking at it and examining it further, even as I am pulled to see what other perspectives there are. Here are some of the treasures I brought back with me from this year's GA in Charlotte, N.C.:

■ Singing Carolyn McDade's "Spirit of Life" with the Rev. Marvin Chandler at the opening of Diversity Day. I cannot count how many times I have sung it, but it was never so meaningful nor so moving as it was when he led us through it. I knew it was a special moment for others as well because the men on both sides of me had to wipe their tears away when it was over. Thank you, Marvin, and thank you, Carolyn.

■ Holding a Goddess figurine during the UUWF workshop on "Rise Up and Call Her Name." After it was decided not to pass around the room this precious, unnamed figurine, a woman in the front row said she wished we could trust ourselves enough to pass Her around. The facilitator, Carol Graywing, stopped and said quietly that issues of trust vs. fear have been a large part of her life recently because of breast cancer. Carol then decided to pass this Goddess around with the other sacred objects she was sharing with those present. There was a collective intake of breath and then a murmur of understanding. As the woman in the front row took it she said, "And her name is: 'She Who Trusts.'" It was a transforming moment. Thank you, Carol, and all who participated.

■ Taking notes during the intense, scholarly lecture on the complexities of Shekinah in "The Feminine Face of God," presented by the Rev. Ellen Brenner and UUs for Jewish Awareness and suddenly hearing *drumming* from the CU-UPS (Covenant Of UU Pagans) workshop a few doors away. The contrast made me giggle and lose my place for

a moment. I felt a warm feeling of gratitude to all those who came before us and helped pave the way for things like this to happen. I asked, "where else?" and thanked God/dess that I had found Unitarian Universalism.

■ Listening to Rosemary Bray McNatt explain how her pregnancy has changed her life and her thinking about God (at the Starr King President's Lecture with the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker) and finding myself relating it all to what I call the deathing experience. I spent most of last year midwifing my only brother through the last months of his life and his death from AIDS and, like Rosemary, I know that there was more between him and harm than me. It has changed my life and when I tell my story, I find other UUs understanding better why their mother refuses to put their father into a nursing home when everyone urges her to take care of herself. I long for more UU conversations on life-death-life cycles (not just "life and death"). Thank you, Rosemary and Rebecca, and thank you, Rocky.

■ The perspectives of any GA are as complex and as numerous as those who attended. Perhaps a GA is like a huge kaleidoscope with many lenses: all of us own it but no one among us can see it all. The broader picture emerges only as we share our experiences, listen to one another, and compare ideas.

So this year, the Editorial Team decided on a different approach to GA reporting than the traditional one of "who, what, and where." Instead, we asked women from around the continent who were attending GA to give us their impressions of the events they attended, which included but were not limited to UUWF programming. The team felt that this approach would show the wide range of women's programming at GA as well as provide a glimpse into the variety of experiences that excite and energize UU women and bring many of us back every year.

What follows are some perspectives from the larger kaleidoscope of GA '93. A complete list of UUWF events that are referred to appears at the end of the article.

— P.C.



The first morning worship of the 1993 GA was co-sponsored by UUWF and the UUA Continental Woman and Religion Committee. We celebrated the voices of women and men through songs and readings honoring cultures throughout the world. Marilyn Gentile, chair of the W&R Committee, shared readings and Nancy Vedder-Shults, recipient of a 1992 UUWF Feminist Theology Award, shared songs from her new tape, "Chants for the Queen of Heaven... and Earth" (Cakes for the Queen of Heaven... and Earth), including her version of "Rise Up and Call Her/His Name."



Photo by Tina Jas, Lexington, Mass.

Helen Johnson, UUWF Life Member from Greendale, Wis., great grandmother and now truck driver, was honored at the UU Service Committee Annual Meeting. She spoke briefly about her six-week experience driving a truckload of supplies to El Salvador with the "Pastors for Peace" caravan. Helen and her grandson, Dan House, traveled across the eastern and southern half of the United States picking up gifts of sewing machines, farm and carpentry tools, and other much needed supplies from over 30 UU churches before delivering them to El Salvador.

— Janet Nortrom, Milwaukee, Wis., UUWF Life Member. Janet has "a passion for social justice, the environment, and spirituality." She is a member of UUWF's 1993 WomanSpace Planning Committee and of the Continental UUWF board.



It was encouraging to have a large number of women and men turn out for the interactive workshop, "Stopping the Violence: Activities for Women's/Men's Groups," co-sponsored by UUWF and UUs Acting to Stop Violence Against Women and facilitated by Alison Cooper and the Rev. Bill Gardiner. Each participant chose three small groups in which to participate in turn. The choices were: Personal Healing, led by the Rev. Mary Grigolia, Worship, led by the Rev. Kitsy Winthrop, Social Action Programs, led by Bill, and Community Action Projects, led by Qiyamah Rahman. One of the most moving experiences was when the group as a whole noted on index cards their personal knowledge of acts of violence against a particular woman or child. We then exchanged cards and read aloud some of these stories.

— Sue Haskin, San Diego, Calif., UUWF Life Member. Sue is a member of the Stopping Gender Violence group at First Unitarian Church, San Diego. She is also a member of the Continental UUWF Board and serves as co-chair of the WomanSpace Planning Committee.



My first experience at a GA (and the UUWF board meeting and Biennial prior to it) provided me with a well-spring of information for continuing in being creative in living life. During this experience, I felt exhausted, challenged, revitalized, perplexed, tranquil and, most of all, hopeful. I met some wonderful people and even had time to walk in the historical Dilworth residential area of Charlotte, since I resided with a member of the Charlotte church during GA. I was a teller/usher as a GA volunteer, and a UUWF booth volunteer, participated in the "Rise Up and Call Her Name" workshop, and Diversity Day, where I was pleased that the small group that I was in was pluralistic in terms of age, color, gender, and sexual orientation.

— Frances Sebuabey, Washington, D.C., UUWF Individual Member. A member of the Continental UUWF Board, Frances has a "special interest in earth-based spirituality." She served on the UUWF 1993 GA Planning Committee.



UUWF's workshop "Counteracting the Religious Right's Curtailment of Women's Rights" provided an opportunity to hear from UUs around the country who are actively involved in their communities for reproductive choice. Many were anticipating a long, disruptive summer dealing with Operation Rescue and Rescue America. I was shocked and saddened by the report of the minister from Florida regarding events surrounding the shooting death of the clinic doctor. The zeal, tenacity and convoluted thinking of the religious right have no bounds. Ann Thompson Cook, executive director of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, moderated the discussion and urged us not to give up, but to be visible and vocal through our state RCAR organizations. We can no longer afford to be silent bystanders while the religious right insists that they alone speak for people of faith.

— Arlene Johnson, member of All Souls Church, president of Johnson Associates, Public Relations, Tulsa, Okla., UUWF Life Member. Arlene is the initiator of the Communicator's Editorial Team and vice president of the Continental UUWF Board. She also shared with us an account of Diversity Day that appears elsewhere in this section.



This year's UUWF Annual Meeting at GA featured a panel of women who shared different perspectives on UU responses to the problems of increasing diversity in the UUA. Speaking from personal experience in more than one of our congregations, Qiyamah Rahman, currently of the newly formed, intentionally multi-cultural Thurman, Hamer, Ellington Church UU, Atlanta, Ga., challenged UUs to look at ourselves and the way we do — or do not — walk our talk. Carol Carter Walker, of the also intentionally diverse Sojourner Truth Congregation in Wash-

continued on page 14

Registration is still open for

The First WomanSpace Retreat: *Moving in Many Worlds*

*Sponsored by the Continental Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
in partnership with UUWF Pacific Southwest District*

October 20 - 24, 1993

Highland Springs Center, Beaumont, Calif.

Registrations are still being accepted for UUWF's WomanSpace Retreat, the first in a series of regular continental gatherings UUWF plans to sponsor. There is a limit to the available space at this year's retreat, but registrations will be accepted until it is filled.

Our program, "Moving in Many Worlds," addresses diversity, living in harmony with the ecosystem, nurturing and celebrating women's spirituality, feminist theology, economic justice, and stopping violence against women.

Mornings — Three Tracks to Choose from

You can choose one of three major program tracks to concentrate on each morning during the retreat:

Economics as if Women Really Mattered — will lead us through both the personal and political sides of economics, envisioning a world where both women and the earth really matter. Coordinated by Susan Meeker-Lowry, author of *Economics as if the Earth Really Mattered*.

Stopping Violence Against Women — will focus on developing strategies for transforming the worlds of women's life cycles: the world of female children, the world of adult women, and the world of older women. Facilitated by UUs Acting to Stop Violence Against Women.

Rise Up and Call Her Name: A Woman Honoring Journey into Global Earth-based Spiritualities — UUWF's new curriculum explores women's spirituality from a diversity of non-European, earth-based traditions. Co-coordinated by Liz Fisher, who developed/edited the curriculum, and Carol Carter Walker, a founder of the Sojourner Truth Congregation in Washington, D.C., and an officer of both the Network of Black UUs and the Coalition of African American UU Organizations.

Afternoons — 36 Workshop Sessions

Afternoons will be devoted to workshops offering a variety of formats and topics. Although complete information about all workshops and facilitators is not yet available, here is a sampling:

"Songs and Stories of Grace" — making music with songwriter/singer Grace Lewis-McLaren, Encinitas, Calif.

"Conflict Management for Women" — bell hooks reminds us that sisterhood is a task, not a gift. We will explore some attitudes and tools to help with that task. With the Rev. Elinor Artman, Cincinnati, Ohio.



WOMANSPACE

"Women's Rights are Human Rights" — strategies for speaking out the truth. By supporting sisterhood, we will create and implement strategies for rethinking and ending gender violence. With Qiyamah Rahman, MSW, Atlanta, Ga. Qiyamah is Program Director of the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services and a member of the UUWF Continental Board.

"Readers Theater: Dramatic Reading Workshop" — and performance! Based on the works of feminist writers: Sappho, Hypatia, Mary Wollstonecraft, Emma Goldman, and others. With Betsy Ortez and Meg Bowman, San Jose, Calif.

"Woman and Worship" — a look at the woman-centered passages that are sacred dimensions, worthy of spiritual worship, for woman of all ages. With Shirley Kitchen, trustee, Canadian Unitarian Council, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

"Be the Heroine in your own Adventures" — explore qualities of women from the past and claim them. With Barbara Starr, psychotherapist, neo-pagan, Oklahoma City, Okla.

"Growing Older as a Celebration of Life" — the joy of growing and sharing your wisdom through ritual and love. With Marilla Missbach, Bedford Park, Ill.

"Between Friends" — dialogue between lesbian and straight women. With Helen Bishop, Central Midwest District administrator, Oak Park, Ill.

"Drum Song" — drumming from many different traditions. Bring any kind of percussion instrument and be prepared to enjoy. With Catherine Martin, Charlotte, N.C., a member of the 1993 UUWF Biennial Planning Committee.

"Encouraging the Heart: Leadership as Ministry" — the Rev. Gretchen Woods, MsUU president, Reston, Va., and the Rev. Laurel Sheridan, Braintree, Mass.

"Saraswati: Goddess of Music" — with Joyce Holmen, Santa Monica, Calif., and Elizabeth Ericksen, Calif.

"The Religious Right and Women's Sexuality" — with CUUPS founders the Rev. Lesley Phillips and Linda Pinti, Cambridge, Mass.

"Dialogue Between Laywomen and Clergywomen" — with the Rev. Deborah Pope-Lance, Sudbury, Mass., and Phyllis Rickter, Arlington, Mass.

"Honoring Each Other, Honoring Ourselves: Multicultural Ritual of Story and Song" — with Nancy Vedder-Shults, Madison, Wis., and Peg Carlson, Salem, Wis.

"Goddesses, Cowgirls and Wild, Wild Women" — with Carolyn Ford Taylor, Taos, N.M.

Worship and WomanCircles

Programming will also include twice daily worship; daily WomanCircles where you can share your experiences with the same small group of women throughout the retreat; lots of women's music; and free time for you to connect with other women and enjoy the retreat setting.

About the Site

Highland Springs Resort and Conference Center is located in the high desert country east of Los Angeles and west of Palm Springs, close to the San Bernadino Mountains. First opened in 1884, it offers a variety of accommodations, an Olympic sized swimming pool, saunas, a spa, and a fitness center.

Who Will Come

We welcome and encourage all women — younger, older, differently abled, of color, lesbian, bisexual, straight, of varied incomes, educations, theo/ologies, socioeconomic backgrounds — to attend WomanSpace.

Child Care and Scholarships

The deadline for applications for child care was September 1. However, space may still be available. Call the registrar for information (including room and board rates for children). Scholarships, made available by a small grant from the principal sponsors of Womanquest, have been filled.

Cost

Registration: \$145 for UUWF members
\$170 for non-members

Room and board: Highland Springs offers a variety of non-smoking accommodations. Sorry, no more singles are available. Other accommodations include some rooms with double occupancy (a queen bed or two twin beds) and many rooms designed for family occupancy (one or two queen beds plus one or two twin beds.) Room and meal costs are: \$190 per person for quad occupancy; \$195, for triple; \$200, for double.

Cancellations and refunds

Through October 1, all but \$25 is refunded. No refunds after October 1.

Travel

Shuttle service to and from the Ontario (Calif.) International Airport will be provided on Wednesday, October 20, between 1 and 6 p.m.; and on Sunday, October 24, between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Rhodes Travel, (800) 634-9191, is the official WomanSpace travel agent. You will receive the cheapest tickets and UUWF will benefit when you book through Rhodes. Rhodes will donate 1% of all WomanSpace sales to the UUWF, which will help support future women's programs.

Conference Registration and Information

Registrar
Joyce Knipps
21108 Donora #A
Torrance, CA 90503
(310) 370-6157

or

Billie Spinat
(213) 254-0926

Send To / Call for Further Information:

Registrar Joyce Knipps or Billie Spinat
21108 Donora #A (213) 254-0926
Torrance, CA 90503
(310) 370-6157

1. Personal Data

Name (as it will appear on your badge)

Street Address

City State/Province Zip/Postal Code

Phone (Day)

Phone (Night)

Special needs: disability accommodation, dietary (vegetarian, lactose intolerance, etc.):

2. Fees

Registration: UUWF Member \$145.00
 Non-member \$170.00

Make checks payable to UUWF.

No refunds for cancellation after October 1

Room and Board:

- Quad occupancy \$190.00 per person
 Triple occupancy \$195.00 per person
 Double occupancy \$200.00 per person

Choose lodging option and indicate choice of roommate(s), if any.

- I am willing to share a bed.

NOTE: If you do not indicate roommate choice, we will assign a roommate to you. We will do our best to accommodate your requests.

Total Enclosed: \$

3. Program

Track choices (indicate 1st, 2nd, 3rd choices):
_____ Economics as if Women Really Mattered
_____ Rise Up and Call Her Name
_____ Stopping Violence Against Women

4. Airport Shuttle

Wednesday, October 20, 1:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 24, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

- I will be using the shuttle.
My arrival time is _____. My departure time is _____.
- I will not need the shuttle.

Homecoming

From the northwest corner of the continent I returned to you,
to the Carolinas, my birthplace of heat and dry red clay.
Hills and sea embrace you, pine trees carpet you with their dry needles.

Twenty years ago, I stuck out my thumb and left the USA, left
the machinery of war, the extremes of poverty and wealth,
the poles of success and failure, the black and white of American life,
the nomadic searchings of a privileged family.
to root myself in the muddy middle ground of Canada
between other, starker mountains and another, more peaceful sea.

But, oh, I was glad to be back:

To be near the little girls, plaited kinky hair laden with barrettes;
the little boys with shaved heads and curious eyes;
the African American women whose sisters' strength and friendship
nourished my childhood and adolescence.

To receive the gift of Marian Edelman's impassioned alphabet of
commitment,
of Cornel West's promise to understand the best and criticize the worst
of the tradition on which he stands.

I was blessed to be present as another new UU, Qiyamah Rahman
courageously and eloquently shared
the lessons of her life, saying:
I became a UU, not because we reflect racial or cultural diversity, but
because of our theological diversity.

Unitarian Universalism was the only place I could feel comfortable on
my eclectic spiritual journey.
And I'm going to stay here — there's nowhere else for me to go.

We must be driven, not by the fears of our past, but by a positive
vision of a world worth living.

Even though I discovered the problems are still there:
Racism and tokenism;
The military, gripping its icy fingers around blinded minds;
Poverty, violence, the NRA,
I was glad to be back:

To reconnect with the vast knowing that transcends
yet respects
transitory physical differences — colour, age, sex, ability, culture —
to carry me home to the Oneness of which we are all, imperfectly, a
part.

To find you, the women UUs, my angels in good company
whose honesty clears the way, whose candles light
the path of witness and action
that is uncharted and unknown, and that draws us ever on.

To know that I had never really left, that we are all on the path together.
wherever we find ourselves.

— Anne-Celia, Burnaby, British Columbia.

"I am a lifelong feminist who lives with a husband, two sons, a male hamster, and a male Siamese fighting fish. This was my first GA and I'll be joining UUWF as soon as I can get to the bank to get American dollars for the dues!"

Kaleidoscope, continued from page 11

ington, D.C., reminded us that it is not always easy for persons of color to feel at home with UUs. I was especially struck by the eloquence with which Tracey Robinson-Harris, of Community Church in New York City, cited some of the effective programs functioning there and pointed out that each of us needs to work consciously to increase our awareness of our own resistances — aware and unaware — to cultural diversity. Ann Olson, also of the new congregation in Atlanta, spoke with pride of the strides made by intentionally becoming multi-cultural and maintaining that stance.

As the meeting was opened to questions from the floor, it was noted that there is economic diversity to be addressed, as well as racial and cultural. Sarah Woods, a student for the ministry, noted that younger women face difficult decisions on technological and biological issues that older women never dreamed about. She articulated frustration at lacking mentors to help clarify these moral dilemmas. The meeting was spirited and provocative. While as usual, I wished we could have offered more concrete tactics, I found valuable substance in the dialogue.

— the Rev. Dr. Gretchen Woods, Reston, Va., UUWF Individual Member. Gretchen is minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston, and is the current president of the Ministerial Sisterhood Unitarian Universalist (MsUU). She also shares with us this account of MsUU's Annual meeting at GA:

One hundred women ministers and two babies gathered at GA for the MsUU's Annual Meeting. It was reported that all steps are complete for affiliate status with the UUA, and negotiations are moving apace to develop a special affiliate status with the UUWF. Supports are being set up for women ministers who may find themselves with special needs in their ministries. Kitsy Winthrop, a member of the UUWF WomanSpace Planning Committee, gave a brief review of the plans for the October conference. Members of MSUU were encouraged to attend and join with all the women of the UUA in continuing the work begun with the WomanQuest Conference in 1990. A special announcement reminded us that the Reverend Mothers (women ministers with children) would be meeting the next day.

The purpose of MSUU is to be a support system giving encouragement, care, and help to women who are in professional religious leadership, to raise consciousness about issues important to women in ministry, and to act as a clearinghouse for information.

continued on page 15



I was inspired by and found a clarity in the lecture sponsored by the Murray Grove Association given by the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker, president of Starr King School of Ministry entitled, "It Matters What We Imagine." According to Dr. Parker, the one heresy for Universalists would be a belief that "there is no gift" of grace. Because grace is considered a given in Universalism, there are sources beyond ourselves which transform, save and sustain us. We must hold ourselves open to the possibility that grace is here and cannot be taken away. Her Methodist grandmother believed we are saved by those people who came before us who held fast to truth despite threats. The examples and stories she used were touching and deepened my understanding of Universalism.

The concert, "Singing the Living Tradition," to introduce our new hymnbook was inspiring. The music, which was specially arranged for the concert and performed by the GA Choir, was thrilling. I loved singing new rounds and music from many ethnic groups. Each congregation should have just such an introduction!

— Joanie Jones, Santa Barbara, Calif., UUWF Unit Member. Joanie is the president of the UU Society of Santa Barbara, where she is also a member of the UU Women's Alliance there.



The opening ceremonies of the '93 GA began with the traditional banner parade. This year there were banners from 289 churches! I carried our society's banner and next to me was a woman from Auckland, New Zealand, carrying her church's banner. Following the parade, the ceremonies centered on 200 years of Universalism and since P.T. Barnum was a Universalist, the theme was the circus! A number of skits were presented to show historical events in our Universalist history. We also enjoyed the display area very much this year. It was really amazing to see how many groups were sponsoring there, including UU Christians, UU Humanists, and UU Pagans.

— Robert and Marianne Nelson, Santa Barbara, Calif., UUWF Unit Members. Robert is the treasurer of the UU Women's Alliance of Santa Barbara and Marianne is a past president.



The International Association of Liberal Religious Women presented a workshop which drew an attentive audience. On behalf of the IALRW (and the International Association for Religious Freedom which matches funds IALRW raises), the Haranavi Brahmo Samaj supervise four Literacy Centres in rural villages of India. Slides were shown which illustrate the comprehensive program: read-



Photo by Kay Aler-Maida, Brooklyn, N.Y.

ing, writing, and numeracy instruction, plus vocational training and health services. Women from some of the poorest areas outside Calcutta are being helped to turn their lives around. In addition, Gladys McNatt, president of IALRW, spoke of the upcoming IALRW Triennial Conference in August in Bangalore, India, directly before the IARF Congress to be held in the same city.

— Pat Luciano, Sea Cliff, N.Y., UUWF Individual Member. Pat is also a member of the Women's Group of the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, Manhasset, N.Y. (formerly the North Shore UU Society, Plandome, N.Y.). She is presently on the board of trustees at her church, writes a monthly column on the environment for its newsletter, and serves as director of development of the IALRW.



Perhaps the high point of the entire GA for me was a workshop with Dr. Thandeka, professor of religion at Williams College, entitled "Doing Theology Justice." She first asked us to think of some principle that we absolutely live by — the sort of thing that if you woke up in the morning and found it not so, you wouldn't be able to get out of bed, or you would go quite mad. She said that "doing theology" is systematizing our experience through the lens of this principle. Then she told us this story: one day in the faculty lounge, she met a white friend of a friend who asked her what it meant to be black. Thandeka told the woman that she would answer the question in one week, on the condition that the woman put "white" in front of every reference to a person who was in fact white, just as many white people put "black" in front of references to people who happen to be black.

A week later the woman confessed that she had been unable to do it, and in fact now two years later, Thandeka reported that the woman never has done it. She asked us to speculate about why this was so impossibly difficult. The conversation that followed was probing and wide-

continued on page 16

ranging — noting everything from the fact that we don't want to talk about race all the time to the tendency of some whites to refer to black as such as a means of gaining "politically correct" advantage.

Next Thandeka invited us to "unpack" the term "black," inviting us to work with this sentence: "I believe some people mean _____ when they use "black." We yanked out the ugly facts that amount to racism.

Finally she returned to the theme of doing theology justice. When we do theology, we systematize experience to enable our lives to remain consciously steady, coherent. To do theology justice is to examine our ultimate concerns — what we do, what community we choose to live in, whom we marry, whether we marry, etc. When we systematize, if we do theology justice, we look behind the coherence and integrity of our own life to all of life. In short, we affirm the worth and dignity of every person.

— Barbara Child, Berkeley, Calif., UUWF Individual Member. Barbara is a member of the UUA Continental Women and Religion Committee and served on both the 1991 and 1993 UUWF Biennial Planning Committees.



Kay Aler-Maida, president of the Continental UUWF and the Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed, minister of the Toronto UU Church, took the stage of the convention center in Charlotte on Monday morning of GA to set the context for Diversity Day. In their opening remarks together, they shared not only the recent history of Diversity Day and how it was planned, but also our early UU history on racial justice, both good and bad.

"Our history in regard to racial justice is brave enough to make you proud, tragic enough to make you cry, and inept enough to make us laugh once the anger passes," according to Dr. Morrison-Reed. He recalled several instances of both blatant and subtle racism over the years that he and another African American UU have experienced in our association.

Reflecting on our racist history and how our culture of racism has hurt each one of us, delegates were asked to seek the answer to the question, "When and how did I become aware of racial difference?" In asking that question, Dr. Morrison-Reed said, we will discover where the pain began — the seed of our disillusionment. For all of us to explore the mistrust and rage, misinformation and fear, shame and guilt that we harbor will take time. Delegates were given some guidelines for the process:

1. If this were easy it would have been done already, but it's not. It's not easy.
2. You are welcome to take risks and make mistakes. So if you feel anxious or fearful of doing or saying the wrong thing, we welcome you to take the risk and make a mis-

take. We will cause pain and be in pain ourselves, but part of our hard struggle is going to be in not hiding from or walking away from the pain, discomfort and conflict.

3. No one is born a racist. Racism is not a genetically transmitted disease. It is a systematically transmitted disease in our culture that we incorporate just as unconsciously as we breathe in polluted air. Our move toward racial justice is a move toward wholeness, toward health, toward becoming at ease with one another.

4. Don't confuse guilt with responsibility. Responsibility is facing the situation with action. Guilt, on the other hand, robs us our strength to respond, because it undermines our self-esteem.

5. We need vision, not guilt. When you dream of something, you can begin to take it upon yourself, make it yours, change it, but you have to dream first.

6. Diversity works from the inside out. It begins with developing a personal understanding of the nature of systemic oppressions. A systemic problem is like a wall of silent assumptions that surrounds us and can, without saying a word, shape our action. We begin to get out of the systemic trap by learning to hear the deadening silence of assumption and learning to answer with a life-giving song of diversity.

7. Walk your talk. We know we can change. We have done it before. At the 1977 GA we passed a resolution calling upon us to address the issues of the systemic oppression of women. Over the last 15 years we have struggled and gradually changed, both personally and institutionally. Our ministry has changed, our forms of worship have changed, our leadership and leadership styles have changed, our language, expectations, curricula, our Purposes and Principles, our hymnal — have all changed. All of this and much more has been influenced and transformed by our commitment to address the systemic oppression of sexism. We have also made a commitment to address the systemic oppression called homophobia. We have called upon ourselves to be welcoming congregations and we have made progress in our ministry and leadership and our language, expectations, curricula, forms of worship and our rites of passage are evolving.

The purpose and goal for Diversity Day was stated as follows:

"To move toward a racially and culturally just Unitarian Universalist community, we offer a celebration of hopes, activities and action to shatter walls built by our oppressive individual and institutional behavior. Our goal for the future is to empower each person to become a co-equal center of freedom, authority and value through a diverse religious community."

— Arlene Johnson, Tulsa, Okla.

continued on page 17



Speaking on behalf of the UUWF during the GA Plenary Sessions (where UUA business is discussed and voted upon by delegates from UU congregations) allows UUWF to ensure that women's voices are heard in deliberations and often gives us a chance to work collaboratively with other UU organizations. For many, the most important

item on the GA agenda this year was a bylaw amendment to include earth-based traditions as a source of spiritual inspiration in the UUA Purposes and Principles. The UUWF Continental Board took a position in favor of the change last year when it was first proposed. Many women find spiritual sustenance in nature-based spirituality and this bylaw change would be a recognition of those roots. In Charlotte, there was a feeling among some delegates that

continued on page 19

GA And Surrendering My Chicago Face

While attending General Assembly this June, 1993,
In Charlotte, North Carolina, I wore my GA face;
Open, expectant,
A slight smile.
I am always excited at GA.
Because I embrace old friends,
and meet new ones, I feel unafraid,
Calm and so blessed to be amongst so many Unitarian
Universalists.
For one week out of the year we take over a whole city, and
I can be a UU and those around me understand
and appreciate and they truly feel like compatriots.

Often, at home in Wisconsin
I wear, what my family calls, my
Chicago face.
The face that's tense and anxious
And ready in case there's trouble.
I lived in Chicago for 10 years, the inner city teaches you
To be ready for anything.
Being a UU most days is difficult, the weariness of the
The constant explanations, the constant readiness.
But, at GA I find I soar.

Being a lesbian, UU minister has
Its special challenges,
As I am in and out of the "Closet"
On both identities depending on the setting.
But at GA I wear my pink triangle with pride,
I listen to others' war stories and their joys and concerns
And I'm out of the closet, breathing easily on both counts.

Attending the update on the Religious Right's
Attack on gay/lesbian and bisexual peoples
My GA face left me for a fleeting second
And, as I listened to statistics of
50,000,000 religious right members in the United States and
Millions of dollars spent on hate mail
And the systematic overturning of state's ordinances of civil
rights

For all,
My Chicago face came upon me.

My task at GA, as I see it
Is to learn, renew, grow and be washed clean.

Washed clean of naivete,
Insincerity and fear.
I am reminded that I am a part of a larger
World view.
My church ministry and UU participation is simply a microcosm
Of the macro world in which I live.
I am also reminded that if I, we, don't speak the
Liberal word of the good news of free spiritual choice
It often will not be spoken.
A voice crying in the wilderness.
We, as UUs often cry in the wilderness for peace,
Justice and a democratic way.

"Take heart," we were told by the Deputy Director of People for
the American Way, "all is not lost.
The Religious Right is organized and moving in force in states
with
Small towns," (Wisconsin being one of them), "but...
They are still a minority and their agenda is being questioned
On many fronts." The speakers reminded us to
Know the candidates running for school boards in our towns,
Know the candidates running for judge and district attorney
positions.
These are often key areas where the voter turn out is low.
Liberal voices must be heard here
And make a difference.

As I disembarked the plane at the Milwaukee airport
I felt the Chicago face beginning to implant itself on my face.
But as I talk about GA with family and friends my GA face
sneaks out.
I am also constantly reminded that it may not be good for my
Health in all circles, here at home to come too far out of the closet.

So, my faces change and do battle with each other
As I struggle with my identities and the responsibilities
And opportunities they present to me and my family and
My congregation.
I go to bed at night very thankful for the GA opportunity.
It sustains all my identities and helps me remember that the
Chicago face, like a Halloween mask, can be removed.

— the Rev. Annie Holmes, Minister, Bradford Community Church
UUU, Kenosha, Wis. Annie refers above to a workshop co-sponsored by
UUWF and the Office of Gays and Lesbians entitled, "SPEAK OUT! on
the Religious Right." Within a week of arriving home from GA, two les-
bian members of Annie's congregation were attacked in their home.

challenges that the membership has asked UUWF leadership to address in the coming two years:

- **Leadership:** Concerns include coalition building; working with dysfunction in groups; decision making processes (an emphasis on consensus, non-hierarchical process, shared leadership, and conflict management); expanding groups in congregations; honoring people with different gifts; building safe church communities; empowering lay leadership; preparing congregations for leadership by women, lesbians.
- **Personal Relationships:** sharing power, leadership styles; emotional and physical violence in personal relationships; empowering men to be non-hierarchical; supporting gay and lesbian relationships; honoring diversity in groups, including racial, cultural, economic, ethnic, sexual orientation.
- **Workshop:** African American perspective; lay and shared ministry; women's participation in worship; emotion, spontaneity, exuberance in worship; personal stories in worship.
- **Social Justice:** prioritizing social justice issues in your group; getting churches to be Welcoming Congregations; including social justice issues in religious education programs; building coalitions; health issues, specifically AIDS; violence against women; environmental issues.
- **Intellectual Content:** inclusive language; access to resources; righteous anger and truth-telling.

UUWF is already involved in many of these issues and concerns. Concern with the pervasive problem of violence against women led the Federation to co-found UUs Acting Against Violence Against Women. Power Tale-Teller Christine Martell is coordinator of this group and Mairi Maeks, UUWF's executive director, as well as UUWF board member Qiyamah Rahman, are members of its core committee. Last year's UUWF Pre-GA Day, "Ladders into Circles," focused on techniques for shared leadership. This issue of *the Communicator* has as its lead story an article on shared ministry. These are but a few of UUWF's initiatives, and they are ongoing.

Extensive notes on the challenges that emerged during the Biennial's working sessions were recorded. UUWF's Continental Board will refer to them as it prioritizes its work during the coming Biennium.

Other Business

The business required by bylaws was transacted on the final morning of Biennial. This included:

- Formal adoption of the above as program goals for the coming Biennium.

■ **Adoption of UUWF budgets.** During the discussion of this, Biennial participants recognized the need for a priority to be placed on increasing the sources of UUWF revenue, through fund raising and other means, in order to fulfill program goals.

■ **Affiliation with the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Canadian Unitarian Council, the International Association of Liberal Religious Women, and the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights.** The board was also charged with reviewing a number of other organizations with which UUWF was previously affiliated and to bring recommendations for reaffiliation or new affiliations to the next Biennial.

■ **Adoption of "On Racial and Ethnic Justice,"** a resolution charging UUWF to "intentionally work to eliminate within our own institutional structure, policies, practices and programs, patterns of thought and behavior that divide us and perpetuate inequality and injustice." The full text of the resolution, as well as plans and suggestions for its implementation, will appear in the next issue of *the Communicator*.

The Biennial concluded with the installation of the Continental UUWF Administrative Board (see page 2 for the names of the board and the 1993-95 UUWF Nominating Committee).

Other Program Highlights

Biennial was also the occasion of the first performance of "Judith Sargent Murray: Woman of Substance," a dramatics readings play by Linda Anderson, which received at 1992 UUWF Feminist Theology Awards, by Charlotte Fleck and Quinton Wiles. The fifth year of the FTAs was also commemorated (see page 7), as was both the UUWF's 30th anniversary and the 200th anniversary of Universalism in North America.

Music throughout was provided by Nancy Vedder-Shults, also a recipient of a 1992 Feminist Theology Award for her audiotape, "Chants for the Queen of Heaven...and Earth"; and by Carole Etzler Eagleheart and Shelley Jackson Denham who, with Biennial Planning Committee member Catharine Martin, also coordinated worship on Wednesday and Thursday morning. "Icebreakers" — at the opening of each session were facilitated by Serena Smallin, of the UUA Youth Office.

Other members of the Planning Committee were: Kay Aler-Maida, Brooklyn, N.Y.; Elinor Artman, Cincinnati, Ohio (who wrote the "Covenant" quoted from earlier in this article); Barbara Child, Tampa, Fla.; Shelley Jackson Denham, Highlands, N.C.; Mairi Maeks, Boston, Mass.; Catharine Martin, Charlotte, N.C.; Arline Cromidas, McNulty, Boston, Mass.; Katie Moriarity-Rubin, Charlotte, N.C.; and Meg Rile, Ellen Spencer, and Juliet Teixeira, all of Boston.

the importance of the change required a congregational study process. Ultimately the wording was changed, requiring a vote again at next year's GA. If this is important to you, encourage discussion of this UUA bylaw change in your congregation.

In addition, after study, the UUWF board took positions in favor of these General Resolutions: "Violence Against Women" called for UUs to break the silence and take action to stop the violence and passed overwhelmingly thanks to the hard work of UUs Acting to Stop Violence Against Women. Look for the annual report by the UUA president on progress in accomplishing the aims of the resolution. "Federal Legislation for Choice" passed strongly with limited discussion.

The first year General Resolutions included "A healthy Start in Life," on prenatal care and infant nutrition. If your local group is interested in working on this issue, the UU Service Committee's "Promise the Children" program has excellent materials and action plans. A first year resolution on "Environmental Justice" also deserves the year's study by congregations; some find its theology, ethics, and language insufficiently inclusive.

— *Clare Fazackerley Iverson, Cincinnati, Ohio, UUWF Life Member. A former Continental UUWF Board member, she currently chairs the UUWF Investment Committee and was chair of the UUWF 1993 GA Planning Committee. Clare also shares the following with us:*

A gorgeous banner welcomed participants to the women's organization booths in the GA display area. Over 40 UUWF members from all over the continent volunteered time at the UUWF booth and dozens of new members joined UUWF. Juliet Teixeira, UUWF staff member who coordinates membership efforts, says, "I was so excited by our booth at GA. This was my first time at GA and I was awestruck by our UUWF members who staffed the booth. They did a great job!" Thanks to all of you!



And many, many thanks to the entire UUWF 1993 GA Planning Committee that coordinated all UUWF workshops and events, collaborated with other UU organizations, and coordinated UUWF floor delegate responses during the Plenaries, researching the resolutions and making recommendations to the UUWF board: Kay Aler-Maida, Brooklyn, N.Y.; Nancy Cook, Charlotte, N.C.; Clare Fazackerley Iverson, Cincinnati, Ohio (chair, second year in a row!); Mairi Maeks, Boston, Mass.; Frances Sebuabey, Washington, D.C.; Lynn Thomas, Meredith, N.Y.; and Nada Velimirovic, Palo Alto, Calif. Your hard work helped to make UUWF an effective and powerful voice of UU women at General Assembly. All of us, UUWF members, board, and staff applaud your efforts and celebrate with you!

"RISE UP" Raffle Results

Raffle tickets for a copy of UUWF's new curriculum, "**RISE UP AND CALL HER NAME**," were sold during both Biennial and General Assembly, where the drawing took place with a very happy result. The winner, Catharine Martin of Charlotte, N.C., will participate in the "training of trainers" (see page 2) for the curriculum and will receive a copy of "Rise Up" in conjunction with the training. Catharine will donate the copy she won in the raffle to a group of women theology students in Romania, who speak and read English and are hungry for resources and program materials in that language.



UUWF Events at GA '93:

- "Celebrating Our Voices," a worship service co-sponsored with the Continental Women and Religion Committee. Speakers were W&R Chair Marilyn Gentile and singer-songwriter Nancy Vedder-Shults.
- "Stopping the Violence: Activities for Women's/Men's Groups," a workshop co-sponsored with UUs Acting to Stop Violence Against Women facilitated by Alison Cooper and the Rev. Bill Gardiner.
- "Vigil on Violence Against Women," co-sponsored with UUs Acting.
- "SPEAK OUT! on the Religious Right," an audience discussion co-sponsored with the UUA Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns and moderated by Marilyn Sewell.
- "Rise Up and Call Her Name: A Woman Honoring Journey into Global Earth-based Spiritualities," a workshop facilitated by Carol Graywing.
- "Counteracting the Religious Right's Curtailment of Women's Rights," a workshop co-sponsored with the UUA Washington Office and the Religious Coalition of Abortion Rights. The speaker was Ann Thompson Cook of RCAR.
- "Judith Sargent Murray: Woman of Substance," a performance of a dramatics readings play by Linda Anderson co-sponsored with the UU Women's Historical Society.

We end this year's coverage of GA with an invitation from Clare and all who attended GA '93 in Charlotte: "A great time was had by all! Come join the fun in Fort Worth, Texas, next June!"

Peg Carlson is a member of the Olympia Brown UUWF unit in Racine, Wis. A former Continental UUWF Board member and former chair of the Central Midwest District W&R Committee, she currently serves on the UUWF Nominating Committee as well as the Communicator Editorial Team. A partner with her husband of 26 years in an insurance agency, she lives in rural Wisconsin with four cats and is learning to adjust to being called "Grandma."

Join us in Transforming Thought

By joining the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
you speak to the UUA and beyond through:

- Active Denominational Representation
- UU's Acting to Stop Violence Against Women
- The Task Force on Clergy Sexual Misconduct
- Our Coalitions and Affiliations

UUWF offers both Individual and Unit membership. Any group of at least 5 women will be received into membership as a unit when they signify in writing their acceptance of the UUWF mission, annually pay the \$10 per member fee (\$12 in 1994), and file the names and addresses of their members with the UUWF.

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