

UUSJ Newsletter - Winter 2011

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

An affiliate of the Chicago Area Unitarian Universalist Council

Andrew T. Fisher, Editor & Communications Director

1448 East 52nd Street, PM Box 144

Chicago, IL 60615

Phone: 773-643-8061 / E-mail: uusj@sbcglobal.net

Web site: <http://www.uusforsocialjustice.org>

Chair's Corner:

We thank the UUSJ Environmental Task Force, and particularly the efforts of Andrew Fisher and Andrew Singleton, for presenting the program on "Ethical Eating: Thoughts for Food" at the UUSJ's 2010 annual meeting, held at Unity Temple, U.U., in Oak Park on November 14. Following that program the UUSJ annual business meeting was held.

The Nominating Committee's slate, which was approved unanimously, included the following new members for the UUSJ Board: Jerry Parker, Third Unitarian Church, and Anne Ward, UU Church of Elgin, as Co-Chair Elect, and Nancy Cowger, Countryside Church, U.U. (in Palatine), as Secretary. We thank Gene Horcher for his service, completing the three year cycle as Chair-Elect, Chair, and then Immediate Past Chair, and also Ken Christiansen, who served as Secretary for about seven months, but has now moved out of state.

One area of discussion during the business meeting was our relationship with the Chicago Area U.U. Council (CAUUC). CAUUC is assessing whether it should continue, and if so with what new goals/directions and leadership. At this point CAUUC is planning to hold an annual meeting on Saturday, April 2, 2011, at which those matters will be debated and brainstormed. While UUSJ

is an independent Illinois not-for-profit corporation, with Sec. 501(c)(3) status under the Internal Revenue Code, it has been affiliated with CAUUC since the mid-1990s and receives about half of its annual income from CAUUC.

Another area of interest is the embryonic efforts to form a UU statewide advocacy network for Illinois, which has been named the UU Action Network of Illinois (UUANI). Supporters of this effort have just formed an initial six person Board of Directors, with two representatives from Chicago, two from the suburbs, and two from downstate. UUSJ will likely be asked to serve as the fiscal agent for UUANI until it can secure its own status under the Internal Revenue Code. How the UUSJ Action Alert Network, which has over 80 participants in northeastern Illinois, will coordinate with a UUANI network, is another area that will need to be addressed.

Other areas that drew interest at the annual meeting included:

- How our congregations might become more involved in the UUA's Statements of Conscience process, and then put adopted Statements of Conscience into action.
- Using the UUSJ web site to post minutes, program presentations, and policy papers.

- Getting more Chicago area UUs to purchase Standing on the Side of Love t-shirts and then wear them as we encourage Chicago area U.U.s to participate in witness events related to Standing on the Side of Love causes.

Allan Lindrup, UUSJ Chair
uusj@sbcglobal.net or 773-643-8061

Report of the Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness

Shortly after the November elections the Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness initiated an action alert urging the President to veto legislation that would extend the Bush era tax cuts to income over \$200,000 for individuals or \$250,000 for married couples, as we believe the Congress would afterwards agree to pass legislation that would extend the cuts to only the income below those limits. As we know, the President subsequently reached an agreement with the Republican leadership to extend the Bush era tax cuts for all for two years in return for extending unemployment benefits for 13 months and extending some other benefits for lower and middle income Americans. The President felt that it was the best economic stimulus package he could achieve at this time, when we are still working on reducing the unemployment and underemployment caused by the Great Recession. Several Republican Senators also agreed to support an end to Don't Ask, Don't Tell and to passing the new START Treaty if the compromise on the tax rates was enacted. We will continue to look

toward increases in taxes on the wealthy as part of the efforts to reduce the federal budget deficit, which will be the major focus of the new Congress.

This task force approved the most recent Home and Hope Booster grant, which ended up being for \$415, to go to the UU Congregation of Woodstock, for the unreimbursed expenses they incur in serving as a PADS shelter one day a week. That congregation is one of 7 congregations in McHenry County that provides an overnight shelter one night a week Oct. 1 through March 31 of each year. The U.U. Congregation of Woodstock is McHenry County's PADS shelter each Wednesday night October through March. The shelter provides a bed, plus hot dinner, breakfast, sack lunch, shower, and socializing for homeless persons who are living in McHenry County and who otherwise would have nowhere to go. The PADS shelter at the U.U. Congregation of Woodstock needs 80 volunteers to operate, 32 of whom are members of the U.U. Congregation of Woodstock. The rest of the volunteers are community members who have partnered with them in their ministry to the homeless. Each night that the shelter is open there are 10 volunteers, spread over three shifts. In addition, there are volunteers assigned to purchasing food and scheduling meal providers. The U.U. Congregation of Woodstock also runs an overflow shelter at another church in their community for 5 of the 7 months that the shelters are open. U.U.s coordinate the food and volunteers there, and some of the members of the U.U. Congregation of Woodstock also serve at the overflow Wednesday shelter. Members of the U.U. Congregation of Woodstock provided 840 of the 2,400 Wednesday night volunteer hours this past year.

Members of other congregations and the general public contribute about \$3,000 of the \$5,000 to \$6,000 needed to purchase food and supplies each year, while the U.U. Congregation of Woodstock is left to pick up the balance. We congratulate the U.U. Congregation of Woodstock for their many years of service to the homeless of McHenry County.

During early 2011 this task force is hoping to develop an economically just proposal for bringing the federal budget deficit into some semblance of balance. We will also be considering a proposal to have local housing authorities purchase many foreclosed properties for rehabilitation (as needed) and use as subsidized or otherwise affordable housing units.

The Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness will hold its next regular meeting on Saturday, January 22, 2011, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., at Third Unitarian Church, 301 N. Mayfield, Chicago. We expect to have a special meeting shortly thereafter that will focus on the new initiatives. All are welcome to join with our efforts. If you would like to get the meeting reminders and proposed agendas for our meetings, please email or phone Allan Lindrup at the contacts listed below.

Allan Lindrup, Co-Chair
uusj@sbcglobal.net or 773-643-8061
Ron Chew, Co-Chair ronnkarla@aol.com
or 708-524-9695

UUSJ Environmental Task Force Report

Program on Ethical Eating:
The Environmental Task Force presented a program "Ethical Eating:

Thoughts for Food" at the UUSJ's 2010 annual meeting, held at Unity Temple, U.U., in Oak Park on November 14. We mainly covered truly sustainable and economic ways of growing and transporting food. These included Aquaponics – growing fish and fertilizing plants with their waste – skyscraper farms, organic food without toxic pesticides, the subtle long term effects of exposure to pesticides, family farms, buying and eating low on the food chain, fair trade, high costs of bottled water versus tap water – to your health, the environment, as well as economically – the bottled water costs 6.25 cents an oz. versus only about 2.4 cents an oz. for gasoline! We also covered the needless costs of packaging such as plastic bags, and much more.

Action Alerts:

The Environmental Task Force sent (1) an Action Alert to aldermen who had not endorsed the clean air ordinance. This addressed old coal-fired power plants in southwest Chicago. (2) We plan to issue a federal Action Alert in January encouraging a carbon tax to both raise needed funds, and also to encourage much more sustainable technology to help fight climate change.

Educational Inserts:

We are working on, and expect to mail out by this spring, Educational inserts about: (1) sustainable transportation; (2) nuclear waste; and (3) a recycling update.

Next meeting:

To be held on Sunday, February 20, 2011 from 3:00 to 4:30 PM at the Unity Temple, 875 Lake Street, Oak Park. All are welcome.

With any questions, contact:

Andrew T. Fisher – Chair
847-492-1055 or fisher.a@sbcglobal.net

UUSJ Peace Task Force Report

The Peace Task Force is scheduled to meet Saturday, 2-19-11 at Third Unitarian Church, 301 N. Mayfield, Chicago, 2:30 PM. CAUUC church members and friends are invited to attend in person or by conference call (call 1-800--704-9804 then enter the code 892781 followed by #).

The Task Force is concerned about the huge amount of money the USA spends on current and past military expenses. By some estimates this amounts to 50% or more of our Federal budget. We have three major sources of information on excessive military spending. These are the War Resisters League (warresisters.org), Rep. Jan

Schakowsky's Deficit Reduction Plan and the American Friends Service Committee Federal Deficit and Federal Budget Priorities Report.

All three reports noted above show an excess of wasteful military spending. Members of the Task Force feel we can save money, encourage peace, restrain imperialistic aggression and still maintain an adequate national defense.

We are working on an Action Alert to encourage our congressional representatives to present legislation which will work toward these objectives.

Questions? Comments? Contact Gene Horcher Co-Chair 773-561-5296 or horcher@att.net

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