

**AGENDA FOR CHANGE: AN ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER  
ST. LAWRENCE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST DISTRICT  
SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL - NOVEMBER 2008**

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(Deadline for December issue is December 1)

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**SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR**

**December 10, 2008:** Sixtieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**March 22, 2009:** Interfaith Impact of NYS Forum – “The Healthy Teens Act” – First Universalist Church of Rochester

**April 1-5, 2009:** Re-envisioning Economic Justice in the New Era (20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference of Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community). Rowe Camp and Conference Center. For information call Marcia Meyers (503-665-3957) or visit web site at <http://www.uujec.org>. To register go to <http://www.uujec.org/register.pdf>.

**March 21-24:** Sexuality Education Advocacy Training in Washington, DC (details to come)

**April 24-26:** St. Lawrence District Annual Assembly, Albany, NY. Social Justice Council workshop TBA

**June 24-28:** Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly – Salt Lake City, Utah

**ST. LAWRENCE DISTRICT SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL NEWS**

At its August meeting the Board of the St. Lawrence District passed a resolution to empower the district Social Justice Council to speak out on public issues. The wording of the resolution follows: “to empower the Social Justice Council, with the approval of District Executive Tom Chulak, to speak for the District on issues in line with UUA policy.”

The Social Justice Council is looking for volunteers. We meet monthly via conference calls, with face-to-face gatherings at our annual social justice conference, the District Annual Assembly and a summer retreat. If you are interested please contact Chair Harsey Leonard at [harsey.leonard@verizon.net](mailto:harsey.leonard@verizon.net) or Coordinator Dick Gilbert at [Rsgilbert@uuma.org](mailto:Rsgilbert@uuma.org).

## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION NEWS

### The UUA Washington Office for Advocacy (UUAWOA)

UUAWOA has initiated an Action of the Month on which its newsletter will focus. The focus for November is HIV/AIDS and Partnerships. See if your congregation's leaders want to work together on one or more of these important steps forward. If you would like to receive weekly action alerts and progress reports, sign up for Advocacy News or the monthly SAC-News or the JTW-News (Journey toward Wholeness). [www.uua.org/socialjustice](http://www.uua.org/socialjustice).

Job Opening at the UUA Washington Office: Legislative Assistant for Women's Issues. You can read the full job posting on [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org). Here is a brief description: Title: Legislative Assistant for Women's Issues, UU Women's Federation Clara Barton Internship; Primary Role: Advocacy on public policy issues within the portfolio of gender and sexual justice, including monitoring legislation, working in coalitions, lobbying, mobilizing and supporting UU congregations and activists. Term: Jan 2009 - Jan 2010 with a possibility of a one year extension through January 2010. The goal of the UUA Social Justice Internship Program is to combine service, learning, and faith development in order to produce energetic young adults with the professional skills and strength of character to be lifelong leaders in Unitarian Universalism and working for social justice. Applications must be received by noon EST on Monday, November 17th, 2009. See <http://www.uua.org/aboutus/careeropportunities/socialjustice/index.shtml> for the full application.

## NEW YORK STATE ISSUES

### Governor Paterson Announces New Website To Open Budget Process

Governor David A. Paterson announced creation of a new website, [www.ReduceNYSpending.gov](http://www.ReduceNYSpending.gov), that will prompt a discussion of how to deal with New York's budget. With the State facing significant budget deficits and a struggling economy, the Governor has launched a state-wide discussion about priorities. New York State depends on Wall Street tax revenues for 20 percent of its tax revenues. The State must close a budget shortfall of at least \$1.5 billion in the current fiscal year, a deficit of \$12.5 billion in 2009-10 and, over the next four years, a projected cumulative budget gap of \$47.0 billion – the largest in State history.

The website has several features:

- Information about New York's fiscal condition and Governor Paterson's initiatives to control State spending

- A section for New Yorkers to submit potential savings ideas, their input about the State's spending priorities, or any other comments about the budget process

- A calculator that allows the public to create their own proposal to balance next year's budget, demonstrating the difficult tradeoffs necessary when closing a \$12.5 billion deficit.

Governor Paterson has called for a special session of the Legislature to convene on November 18 to address the State's fiscal problems. He will submit his 2009-10 Executive Budget more than one month early, on December 16, 2008, to get a head start on the process of aggressively confronting the State's substantial future deficits. See Citizen Action of New York's response at [www.FIGHTtheCUTS.org](http://www.FIGHTtheCUTS.org).

## ISSUES FACING THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

Democrats took control of the State Senate after the 2008 election. . . . Here are some key issues and how experts think they might be affected by a Democratic Senate:

“Budget and taxes: Fiscal observers were divided over whether Senate Democrats would back raising income taxes to minimize the budget cuts needed to close a projected \$14-billion deficit through next year. Smith and Gov. David A. Paterson oppose such hikes. The state budget is \$120.8 billion. . . . Smith and Paterson's opposition to hiking the personal income tax on millionaires alarmed liberals. They said the top tax rate has been cut in half in the past 25 years and now should be raised to protect welfare and education programs. Ron Deutsch of New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness said, ‘The governor's across-the-board cuts hurt working people.’

“School aid: Long Island’s eight Republican senators in the past two years have served as a bulwark against attempts to shift education aid from wealthy suburban school districts to struggling ones in New York City and elsewhere. The senators held up budget negotiations two years ago until then-Gov. Eliot Spitzer restored the Island's traditional ‘shares’ of aid. . . .

“Gay marriage (marriage equality, ed.): Though the Assembly passed a marriage equality bill for homosexual couples last year, it hasn't yet come to the Senate floor. Sen. Thomas Duane (D-Manhattan), who is gay, tried to lower expectations, saying, ‘We're putting everything on hold until we fix the economy. It's not just one thing or another thing, it's everything.’ The Rev. Duane Motley of New Yorkers for Constitutional Freedoms, which opposes gay marriage, predicted that Democrats will ‘test the waters.’ He said, ‘The leadership of the Democrats would certainly like to push it, but I don't think they have the votes to support it.’ One Democrat, Sen. Ruben Diaz Sr. of the Bronx, has said he would vote no.

“Bottle bill: Past efforts to expand the bottle deposit law to include juice, tea and water containers have succeeded in the Assembly, but failed in the Senate. Laura Haight, environmental director for the New York Public Interest Research Group, said she didn't know if Democratic senators would bring the bill to the floor, but many talked about the measure while campaigning this fall. . . . “

“Rockefeller drug laws: Gabriel Sayegh, project director for the Drug Policy Alliance, hopes the switch in Senate control will shift the state's drug policies toward treatment and social services instead of costly incarceration. ‘We've had 35 years of drug laws, not just with bad sentencing policies, but also an approach to drugs that has failed dramatically,’ he said.

- based on reporting and quotes from *Newsday*, November 6

### Action on New York State Issues

To support Marriage Equality. Concerned Clergy for Choice (Rabbi Dennis Ross) at [dennis@fpaofnys.org](mailto:dennis@fpaofnys.org). To endorse the Open Letter to Religious Leaders on Marriage Equality visit: <http://www.religiousthought.org/marriageextra.html>.

To support universal, single-payer health care visit Citizen Action of New York: [mail@citizenactionny.com](mailto:mail@citizenactionny.com) or Rebecca Elgie at [relgie@earthlink.net](mailto:relgie@earthlink.net) or go to the IINYS website at [www.interfaithimpactnys.org](http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org)

To participate further in the discussion over budget priorities, contact the New York State Council of Churches which invites stories about the poor and those trying to help them for whom these cuts would be harmful. Send them to [nyscoc@nycap.rr.com](mailto:nyscoc@nycap.rr.com) or [nyscoc@aol.com](mailto:nyscoc@aol.com). A helpful subject line would be “commitment story.”

## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE CORNER

A message from Jack Maniloff, UUSC Regional Coordinator for the St. Lawrence District:

Since its founding in 1940, to help refugees escape Nazi persecution, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) has worked to advance human rights and social justice in the United States and around the world. Its programs are based on Unitarian Universalist principles that affirm the worth, dignity, and human rights of every person. The UUSC works through advocacy, education, and partnerships with grassroots organizations, and currently has programs in 19 countries to promote economic justice, advance environmental justice, defend civil liberties, and protect the rights of people in times of humanitarian crisis. For example, UUSC partners now counsel torture victims in Darfur, repair fishing boats for shrimpers in the Louisiana Bayou, form alliances among street vendors in Kenya, and fight water privatization in Peru.



To retain its independence, the UUSC does not accept government or foundation funds, or funds from the UUA. It is totally supported by gifts from individuals and congregations. Gifts at all levels help, and gifts at the following levels are counted toward UUSC membership: General, \$40; General (dual), \$75; Student/Youth, (\$10); Student/Youth (dual), (\$10); Senior, \$20; and Senior (dual), \$40. Gifts of \$100 or more are eligible to be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, N.Y.! Members receive the UUSC quarterly Rights Now newsletter. At this holiday season, consider making a gift to the UUSC online at [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org).

For more information, contact Jack Maniloff ([jkmf@mail.rochester.edu](mailto:jkmf@mail.rochester.edu)) or go to the UUSC web site ([www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org)).

VIDEO AVAILABLE. *Heroes of the Spirit: Genocide then, Genocide Now*. This is the story of UUSC's beginnings saving refugees from Nazi Germany to its current work in Darfur. Contact UUSC to obtain this video or contact [Rsgilbert@uua.org](mailto:Rsgilbert@uua.org) to borrow a copy.

## EDITORIAL: Kairos and Chronos - Election 2008

“Things are moving so fast in race relations a Negro could be president in 40 years. There’s no question about it, in the next 40 years a Negro can achieve the same position that my brother has. Prejudice exists and probably will continue to, but we have tried to make progress and we are making progress. We are not going to accept the status quo.” Robert Kennedy in 1968

After the 2008 election one high school teacher wrote on the blackboard: “Rosa sat, so that Martin could walk, so that Barack could run, so that our children can fly.”

Theologian Paul Tillich noted two kinds of time: clock and calendar time (chronos) and time propitious for change (Kairos). Robert Kennedy spoke of chronos; the high school teacher wrote about kairos. The exuberant reaction to the election of the first African-American President Barack Obama was palpable around the country and the world, even among some of those who voted for other candidates.

While Obama’s election revealed amazing progress (40 years after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy), the American dilemma of race has hardly been resolved. Even though the “Bradley effect” (black California gubernatorial candidate Tom Bradley lost after leading in polls, presuming whites would not admit their racism to anyone), seems to have been either dismissed or exaggerated, racism is not dead. My wife, an election inspector, reported one woman who exclaimed she could never vote for a black man. Still, the progress is quite amazing and to be savored.

However, after every election, no matter how much I support the candidate elected, I become part of the “loyal opposition,” not a partisan scold, but one who tries to take a prophetic stance, attempting to be like Amos, dropping the plumb line of justice over policy decisions. Unlike Amos, I do not speak as if I were the mouthpiece of God, but from my own conscience. While I am excited over Obama’s win, I have policy disagreements with him. His health care plan, while an improvement, does not go far enough toward the universal single-payer system I favor. I have my doubts about the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, though I do not doubt he will be more respectful of church/state separation than the present administration. And I am anxious about expanding the war in Afghanistan as a futile continuation of the so-called “war on terror,” rhetoric I hope he will end.

And so, while delighted that a community organizer who has “real responsibilities,” just like the mayor of Wasilla, Alaska, I believe his election only opens the door to real change toward peace and justice. He creates a necessary, but not sufficient condition, for the just change I would like to see. I hope we can capture the energy of this year’s campaign and transform it into work for peace and justice as we march toward the Beloved Community. Euphoria, while giving us momentary energy, is no substitute for hope which provides spiritual energy and determination for the long haul. My sense right now is that UU activists are for the most part deliriously happy, but tired. It is time to take a brief break to celebrate, savor past efforts, and then get to work on the “hum-drum” work of democracy. We cannot afford to let this unique historical moment go to waste. – Dick Gilbert

P.S. Obama Transition Website: <http://change.gov/page/s/ofthepeople>

## **Services Offered by the Social Justice Council 2008-2009**

Contact [Rsgilbert@uuma.org](mailto:Rsgilbert@uuma.org) or 585-244-7403 for further information:

Listed below are brief descriptions of social justice workshops, sermons, talks and consultations I offer to SLD congregations and clusters. Unless otherwise stated, these programs can be formatted for an entire day or a half-day.

### **Up to Our Steeples in Politics**

What is the proper relationship between church and state? Politics and religion? Faith and social action? For this election year and beyond, congregations ought to know the “real rules” of what churches can and cannot do in the public arena.

### **Walking the Talk: Basic Workshop in Congregational Social Justice**

Unitarian Universalists are eloquent in talking about peace and social justice. However, we have our problems in “walking the talk.” This workshop explores the spiritual roots of social action, a perspective on the unique UU mission, organizational tools for a congregation and a practicum on planning for change. Participants are asked to come with a Congregational Self-Analysis Survey completed. This workshop is designed as a fundamental orientation to congregation-based social action.

### **“Giving Life the Shape of Justice”: A Level Two Workshop**

These words from our Unitarian Universalist song “Spirit of Life,” are central to the task we face as justice-makers. The workshop is designed for congregations which have developed social justice programs, but would like to evaluate and expand them. This workshop is in effect a consultation.

### **Being the Change We Want to See: A Workshop on Spiritual Growth**

Ghandi once said that we have to be the change we want to see. In working on society, we first work on ourselves – what does that entail? This workshop explores the process of spiritual growth through peace and justice work. Participants will be invited to tell their stories and gain perspective on their personal narratives.

### **The Prophetic Imperative: Organizing for Change**

An exploration of the history, theology, ethics and sociology of social change through Dick Gilbert’s book, *The Prophetic Imperative: Social Gospel in Theory and Practice*. This program requires a full weekend.

### **From Principles to Politics with Justice**

A workshop on religious advocacy. How does advocacy differ from lobbying? How do we mobilize our people to apply our ethical principles to the social order? What are the pitfalls? Should we do it at all? How do we respond to the effective advocacy of the Religious Right? We’ll talk about how to mobilize the congregations in our district for more effective social action - through New York State Interfaith Impact.

### Should the Church Speak Out?

One of the most common and most controversial issues in faith-based social action is the corporate role of the church in the public square. Should a congregation take a stand? Does it violate individual conscience? If it does speak out, how? This workshop is a discussion of the pros and cons of speaking out and different ways to approach the problem.

#### Issue-Oriented Workshops and/or Sermons/Talks

- Politics in the Pulpit – Possibilities and Pitfalls
- Does the Earth Have Moral Rights? An ethical exploration of environmental justice.
- How Much Do We Deserve? An Exploration in Distributive (Economic) Justice
- What Is a “Just War” – a UU Perspective on War and Peace
- The Eighth Day of Creation: Darwin, Evolution and “Intelligent Design” – A Conversation with the Religious Right
- Growing People of Prophetic Power: Social Justice and Religious Education
- Building the Beloved Community – in the Congregation and Beyond
- The Jonah Complex: Why Should I Be Involved?
- “War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning” – and Peace?
- Justice-Making in the Empire State: Applying UU Values to NYS Issues
- Martin Luther King, Jr. – Shaping the Conscience of the Nation
- Meriting the Wind We Inherit: A History of UU Peace and Justice Work
- The Social Gospel According to Jesus
- The Moral State of the Nation: January 20, 2009 and Beyond
- “No Consorting with Angels” – the Religious Life of Susan B. Anthony
- Gentleness in Living: What Knoxville Can Teach Us
- Reproductive Choice: Where Do We Go from Here?

#### REQUEST FOR SERVICES FORM - St. Lawrence UU District - Social Justice Program

Please complete form and send to Dick Gilbert, SLD Social Justice Coordinator, at [Rsgilbert@uuma.org](mailto:Rsgilbert@uuma.org) or call 585-244-7403 for further information

Requested Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Congregation or Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: (Street) \_\_\_\_\_

(City or town) \_\_\_\_\_ (Zip): \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Service: (See above or specify your request)

Sermon topic \_\_\_\_\_

Workshop (theme) \_\_\_\_\_

Lecture (topic) \_\_\_\_\_

Consultation (purpose) \_\_\_\_\_

Financial arrangements according to District policy (\$250 a day – SLD covers expenses):

Congregations are encouraged to utilize clusters to share expenses.



JOIN INTERFAITH IMPACT NOW!  
Individual and Congregational Memberships Welcome

Interfaith Impact of New York State is a UUA-UUSC partner organization. The St. Lawrence District is an official member and UUs are active on the Board. Robb Smith of our Albany congregation is Executive Director - robb@interfaithimpactnys.org. We encourage individual Unitarian Universalists in New York State to join. We also encourage you to invite your congregation or social action group join as an organizational member. For your convenience a membership form is below. Phone: (518) 463-5652 - E-mail: [interfaithimpactnys@verizon.net](mailto:interfaithimpactnys@verizon.net) Background information on state issues at [www.interfaithimpactnys.org](http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please print or type:

Name and Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation:  Protestant  Unitarian Universalist  Reform Synagogue  Other

Membership Dues Enclosed: Individual  \$10  \$20  \$30  \$40  Other \$\_\_\_\_\_

Congregation/organizations  \$50  \$200  \$300  Other (amount) \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: Interfaith IMPACT of New York State  
and mail to: IINYS, 646 State Street, Albany, NY 12203

Your Assembly Member \_\_\_\_\_ Your State Senator \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your support

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