

**AGENDA FOR CHANGE: AN ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER
ST. LAWRENCE DISTRICT SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL – JUNE 2009**

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(Deadline for summer issue is August 1)

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SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR 2009

June 24-28: Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly – Salt Lake City, Utah. Go to www.uua.org for details. The Peacemaking Statement of Conscience is on the agenda. Your editor will be involved in two workshops: “And Thy Neighbor as Thyself,” sponsored by the Universalist Heritage Foundation, and “Be the Change,” a panel on social justice moderated by the Rev. Stephen Schick – both Saturday.

July 11-18: Freedom Summer: A Civil Rights Journey sponsored by UUSC www.uusc.

July 26-August 1: UULTI (Unitarian Universalist Leadership Training Institute) at Juniata College in Pennsylvania. Go to www.sld.uua.org for details.

November 7: “**Doing Justice in an Economic Tsunami**” will be the theme of the 2009 **St. Lawrence District Social Justice Council** annual conference at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Amherst, Saturday, November 7. Former UUA President John Buehrens will be the featured speaker. **SEE BELOW**

November 22: UUSC Guest at Your Table Sunday



**The St. Lawrence Unitarian Universalist District
Social Justice Council Presents**

DOING JUSTICE IN AN ECONOMIC TSUNAMI

November 7, 2009—9:30am to 4pm

Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst



Theme Speaker – JOHN BUEHRENS

Former President, Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister, First Parish in Needham, MA
This fourth annual conference will feature John Buehrens, former President of the UUA. John brings not only a national perspective on economic justice, but also the understanding of a parish minister. He has been a prominent figure on the national religious scene for years, has served as special advisor to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and is a prolific author.

The economic meltdown at the national and world levels has pervaded the religious consciousness. The recession has not only a social, political and economic impact, but also a moral and spiritual one as well. How do we respond as individuals, as a congregation, as a religious movement? John will outline his views on this troubling topic.

In addition to the theme talk there will be a question and answer period and topical workshops including Single Payer Health Care; Racism and Economic Justice, Economic Justice and Unitarian Universalists and Doing Religious Advocacy, among others.

Conference registration information and a detailed program will be available in early September on the St. Lawrence District website: www.sld.uua.org and will be mailed out in *Agenda for Change*. For further information, contact Dick Gilbert at Rsgilbert@uuma.org.

NEW YORK STATE ISSUES

***** See Interfaith Impact of NYS June Newsletter – ATTACHED *****

NATIONAL ISSUES**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION NEWS**

The UUA Washington Office for Advocacy (UUAWOA)

visit www.uua.org/socialjustice. See SAC News June 1 (ATTACHED).

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE CORNER

Register for UUSC's e-Community: By registering for UUSC's e-Community, you will stay informed about the latest news on UUSC issues you care about. You will also get the chance to make your voice heard, when decision-makers most need to hear from people committed to human rights and social justice. e-Community subscribers receive UUSC's monthly e-newsletter and periodic alerts about urgent actions and humanitarian crises.



See the UUSC June Newsletter (ATTACHED)

For more information, contact Jack Maniloff (jkmf@mail.rochester.edu), St. Lawrence District UUSC Regional Coordinator, or go to www.uusc.org.

EDITORIAL: IN MEMORIAM: DR. GEORGE TILLER - Richard S. Gilbert

“In the presence of life we say no to death; in the presence of death we say yes to life.” I have used these words of the late J. Donald Johnston for years in beginning memorial services. They have a special poignancy as I reflect on the death of Dr. George Tiller, courageous provider of reproductive health services for women, until he was gunned down as he ushered at his Lutheran church while his wife sat the the choir loft. This tragic event is a kind of parable for the women’s reproductive health community.

Anti-choice zealots got what they wanted – the closing of a clinic. In protesting what they call the “violence” of abortion, one of their number resorted to violence. Evidently the ends of stopping abortion justifies any means. To be sure most anti-abortion advocates have deplored this violence. Some of my good friends and fellow social justice advocates are part of that community which regrets the assassination. And yet. And yet. I am afraid the very zealotry and language of so many anti-abortion people has created a climate of violence making these murders – and there have been several – almost inevitable.

I was especially fascinated with a column by former ant-abortion protestor Frank Schaeffer, who with his father, evangelical pro-life leader Francis Schaeffer, produced books selling over a million copies which, in Frank Schaeffer’s words, “in certain passages, advocated force if all other methods for rolling back the abortion ruling of *Roe v. Wade* failed.” In the June 2 issue of the *Baltimore Sun* he wrote: “My late father and I share part of the blame for the murder of Dr. George Tiller, the abortion doctor gunned down on Sunday. Until I got out of the religious right (in the mid-1980’s) and repented of my former hate-filled rhetoric, I was both a leader of the so-called pro-life movement and a part of a Republican Party hate machine masquerading as the moral conscience of America. . . . Angry speech has become the norm in American religion from both the right and the left. . . . The people who stir up the fringe never take responsibility. But I’d like to say that I, and the people I worked with in the pro-life movement, all contributed to this killing by our foolish and incendiary words. I am very sorry.”

Yet the harsh rhetoric continues: Douglas Johnson, Legislative Director of the National Right to Life Committee, called President Obama a “hardcore pro-abortion president.” The American Life League dubbed him “one of the most radical pro-abortion politicians ever,” and Father Frank Pavone of Priests for Life warned that Obama will “force Americans to pay for the killing of innocents.” All this rhetoric despite Obama’s emphasis on the “common ground” of reducing abortions, which many of us support while wary that he is too timid in promoting reproductive justice. Cristina Page, author of *How the Pro-Choice Movement Saved America*, wrote, “Anti-abortion groups will put out carefully worded press statements condemning the murder of Dr. Tiller, as became routine for them during the Clinton years. But unless the rhetoric they choose from now on becomes careful too – they may be the enablers of murder and terror.”

I do not believe in guilt by association, but I do believe that in our rhetoric we create a climate for certain kinds of behavior. Our rhetoric – the words of the reproductive justice movement – must be respectful of those who conscientiously disagree with us, conciliatory with those who would dialogue with us, but absolutely firm in defending a woman’s right to choose. The death of George Tiller reminds us these modest values are fraught with a risk that must be taken.

Services Offered by the Social Justice Council 2009-2010

Contact Rsgilbert@uuma.org or 585-244-7403 or 585-738-8229 for further information: Listed below are brief descriptions of social justice sermons, workshops and consultations offered by Social Justice Coordinator Dick Gilbert to SLD congregations and clusters.

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 “walking the talk.” This workshop explores the spiritual roots of social action, perspectives on UU mission, organizational tools and a practicum on planning for change.

“Giving Life the Shape of Justice”: A Level Two Workshop/Consultation

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.

Being the Change We Want to See: Spiritual Growth and Social Action

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.

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? How do we mobilize congregations for effective social action through NYS 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?

Talking the Walk: Why We Do What We Do in Social Action

We are often admonished to “walk our talk,” to live out our values in the world; we are seldom challenged to “talk our walk,” to discern why we do what we do to repair it. What are the underpinnings of social justice – how do we change the world and how does that change us?

***Agenda for Change* SLD Social Justice Council Newsletter**

If you would like to subscribe to this monthly e-newsletter contact Rsgilbert@uuma.org. Also, see Social Justice in the new St. Lawrence District website: <http://www/sld.uua.org>.

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 Background information on state issues at www.interfaithimpactnys.org

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Phone: _____ FAX: _____ E-mail _____

Congregation: _____

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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
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Thank you for your support
