

**AGENDA FOR CHANGE: AN ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER  
ST. LAWRENCE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST DISTRICT - SEPTEMBER 2008**

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(Deadline for October issue is October 5)

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**SOCIAL JUSTICE EVENTS CALENDAR**

**October 4:** "Politics & Liberal Religious Values: Campaign 2008" - St. Lawrence District Social Justice Conference in Schenectady (flyer below; conference brochure attached)  
**October 11:** NYS Convention of Universalists – Charlie Clements of UUSC keynote speaker at UU Fellowship of Poughkeepsie, NY – [www.nyscu.org](http://www.nyscu.org)  
**November 9:** Interfaith Impact Forum: "Progressive Religious Values in the Public Policy Arena" - Interfaith Impact of NYS (IINYS) will present a free Conscience in Public Life Forum at the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany on Sunday afternoon, Nov. 9th, from 3:00 - 5:30 p.m. The focus will be on how individual conscience moves out into public life. Panelists will talk about how their conscience - informed by their religious traditions and experience - moves them to take on a particular issue and speak out in public. The panelists will answer questions; there will be small-group breakout sessions. Issues will include sex education for teens, universal health care, same-sex marriage and welfare concerns. IINYS is a statewide organization of Protestants, Reform Jews, Unitarian Universalists and others working for the common good through progressive religious advocacy. For more information, call Robb Smith at 518-441-3231.

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**SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL NEWS**

*Agenda for Change* issues, current brochure, conference information and more are posted on the new St. Lawrence District website: [www.sld.uua.org](http://www.sld.uua.org). To access "The Real Rules," a summary of the IRS rules on what churches can and cannot do in the 2008 election, a major topic of discussion, go to: [www.uua.org/documents/washingtonoffice/real\\_rules.pdf](http://www.uua.org/documents/washingtonoffice/real_rules.pdf).

To register to vote go to [www.VoteforChange.com](http://www.VoteforChange.com). Vote for change makes it easier than ever to register. You can also confirm your existing registration, apply to vote absentee and find your polling place. From Jacqui C. Williams

The UUA has recently launched Web pages for Green Sanctuary programming, [www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/greensanctuary/index.shtml), that provide information about the Green Sanctuary Program. The process for becoming a Green Sanctuary congregation is outlined. The Green Sanctuary Manual will be offered free on line early in 2009.



The St. Lawrence Unitarian Universalist District  
 Social Justice Council Presents  
**POLITICS AND LIBERAL RELIGIOUS VALUES  
 IN THE WAKE OF KNOXVILLE**

**October 4, 2008—9:30am to 4pm**  
 First Unitarian Society of Schenectady



**Theme Speaker – BLAIR HORNER**

Legislative Director - New York Public Interest Group

**RIGGING THE SYSTEM  
 HOW LAWMAKERS CHOOSE THEIR CONSTITUENTS**

This third annual conference will feature Blair Horner, Legislative Director of the New York Public Interest Research Group. He has been a driving force behind NYPIRG's successful campaigns to protect consumers, preserve the environment, reduce tobacco use, reform and make government more accountable, improve healthcare quality and provide the public with information on how state government works.

In view of the tragedy at the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, we have used that lens to reshape parts of our conference. In addition to the theme talk there will be a reactor panel, a question and answer period and topical workshops including violence in sacred spaces, politics in pew and pulpit, the new sanctuary movement, class and UUism, criminal justice reform, and a report from the UUA trauma team about Knoxville, among others. This will be an opportunity for social justice people to consider the implications of their faith in a critical election year. See our social action section on the new district website at [www.sld.uua.org](http://www.sld.uua.org).

## STATE ISSUES

### MARRIAGE EQUALITY SCORES VICTORY!

Good news on Marriage Equality! A state trial judge has upheld Governor David Paterson's directive to state agencies to recognize same-sex marriages performed outside the state. Gay couples may still not marry in New York State, but this issue is on the agenda. Marriage is "one of life's most significant events," Justice Lucy Billings of State Supreme Court in the Bronx wrote in her ruling, explaining the deeper reason for the state's recognition rule. And she said that "nothing is more antithetical to family stability" than failing to respect that "solemnized commitment." The NYS Assembly has passed a bill allowing same sex couples to marry. And, says the *New York Times* editorial, "New York's Senate, which has long been under Republican control must also do the right thing." September 16, 2008.

### FAITH AND HUNGER NETWORK SENDS LETTER TO GOVERNOR

Robb Smith, Executive Director of Interfaith Impact of New York State, notes that the Faith and Hunger Network has delivered a letter to Gov. Paterson calling for "moral leadership in ending the problems of hunger, homelessness and poverty in our communities. Specifically, we urge you to propose restoring the value of welfare benefits to at least its 1990 level and to propose quality affordable health care for all. We speak with urgency and embrace the biblical mandates to feed the hungry, give shelter to the homeless, and clothe the naked." The full text of the letter can be found at <http://www.hungeractionnys.org/>.

## NATIONAL ISSUES

### ACTION ALERT ON REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

Even as "pro-life" forces gather in Illinois to brainstorm a massive strategy to shut down Planned Parenthood, the Bush administration is preparing to impose a rule that would limit the rights of patients to receive complete and accurate reproductive health information when they visit the doctor. This new rule could allow individual health care providers to redefine abortion to include the most common forms of birth control – and then refuse to provide them. September 25 is the deadline for public commentary to the Department of Health and Human Services. Go to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America website to sign on to a statement opposing this proposed rule.

### ADVOCACY NEWS UPDATE

The UUA Washington Advocacy Office publishes regular updates on issues they are addressing. These newsletters can be accessed at [www.uua.org/socialjustice](http://www.uua.org/socialjustice). Their e-mail address is [socialjustice@uua.org](mailto:socialjustice@uua.org). Topics of recent newsletters have included *Support Mental Health Parity Now!* (July 30); *Get Ready for Change* (August 14), *Truth and Reconciliation, Reparations* (August 21); *Peace and Conflict and Iraq, Darfur, History . . .* (August 28); *Elections, \$ for Voter Reg. & More, September Action of the Month: Tents of Hope for Darfur* (September 4), *Social Action Chair (SAC) News Elections, \$ for Voter Reg. and More* (September 11).

## **Editorial: GILBERT GUIDE TO VOTING YOUR CONSCIENCE 2008**

Below is a candidate questionnaire for your consideration – and discussion.

### Issue 1: Reproductive Health and Justice

- Do you favor expanded access to family planning services for low-income women?
- Do you support comprehensive sex education or abstinence-only programs?
- Do you favor requiring all hospitals receiving federal funding to offer emergency contraception (EC) to victims of rape? to ensure patient access to emergency contraception?
- Do support increased international funding for family planning and reproductive health services, including abortion and to fight HIV/AIDS?
- Do you support the *Roe v. Wade* interpretation of the constitutional right to privacy?

### Issue 2: Economic Justice:

- Should government actively seek to narrow the gap between rich and poor?
- Should welfare reform should guarantee an income for all Americans?
- Do you favor a “living wage” which would provide a basic material life-style for all?
- Do you believe in a single-payer, universal, national health care system?

### Issue 3: Peace and International Relations

- Do you believe in prompt withdrawal of our troops from Iraq on a timetable?
- Do you favor increased military action in Afghanistan?
- Do you believe that the world responds more to the “power of our example than to the example of our power?” (Bill Clinton)
- Do you favor the “Bush doctrine”?
- Do you believe in free trade? Explain. Fair trade? Explain.

### Issue 4: Energy and the Environment

- Do you favor increased development of nuclear power and “clean” coal?
- Which is a priority - creating sustainable energy sources or increasing production of oil?
- Should our political leaders urge the American people to lead a more sustainable life-style, or urge creation of more energy to meet the needs of our current life-style?

### Issue 5: Human Rights

- Do you support the right of same-sex couples to marry?
- Do you support the military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy?
- Do you support affirmative action programs on the basis of race? Class?

### Issue 6: Church and State/Religion and Politics

- Do you believe in a strict separation of church and state?
- Does your religious faith influence your policy decisions? If so, how?
- Do you believe creationism and/or Intelligent Design should be taught in public schools?

## **CAMPAIGN DEBATES: (9 PM FOR 90 MINUTES)**

- 1st Presidential Debate: Friday, September 26: Domestic & Economic Policy
- Vice-Presidential Debate: Thursday, October 2
- 2nd Presidential Debate: Tuesday, October 7; Town Hall Format
- 3rd Presidential Debate: Wednesday, October 15: Foreign Policy/National Security

## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE CORNER

Last December, during UUSC's D.C. Days of Action, Rev. Bill Schulz, UUSC's board chair, gave a talk on a trip he made to Kalma camp in Darfur. I was particularly touched by a story he told about seeing a woman in tattered rags wearing a beautiful piece of glass around her neck as a piece of jewelry. When Schulz asked her what it was, she replied, "It is me." It is me....

The story shows that no matter what squalor and degradation people are subjected to, they find ways to overcome their circumstances and bring some form of hope and beauty into their lives. This is what makes us human. This woman in Darfur, no doubt having been subjected to violence and destruction that most of us cannot imagine, still holds onto what is beautiful, her sense of identity, herself.

As the Olympics came to a close and we saw the athletes standing on pedestals wearing gold, silver, and bronze medals, I thought of this woman wearing the glass around her neck and all the other women who are struggling in Darfur.

Although the situation in Darfur is dangerous for all, women and girls are especially vulnerable to violence. In some camps, women make up 80 percent of the population. They show pure determination to survive in conditions of dignity. They work together to protect themselves, leaving their camps together, trying to find safety in numbers. They share their food and water with each other. They work together to form women centers and to speak to leaders about their needs.

Women and girls in Darfur are heroes without medals. Their stories may not be broadcast on NBC, but they can be shared in line at the grocery store, at your next town hall meeting, or over dinner with a friend.

As UUSC works with partners to weave a web of protection for women and girls in Darfur, we need concerned citizens to raise awareness and build solidarity in cities and towns around the United States. One way to do this is to order free UUSC Drumbeat for Darfur materials to use in your community.

Go to [www.uusc.org/order\\_drumbeat](http://www.uusc.org/order_drumbeat) to order free UUSC tent cards that your community can use to urge the Senate human rights subcommittee to oversee the UNAMID mandate to protect Darfuri women and girls from violence.

We need to demand that our legislators take action to protect women and girls in Darfur. We need to make their struggle as visible as the gold medals around the necks of the athletes at the Beijing Olympics. We need to remember the woman with the glass around her neck who is determined to survive, and do *our* part to bring hope and beauty back into their lives.

Kara Smith's blog at [www.uusc.org/blog/entry/1614/heroes\\_without\\_medals](http://www.uusc.org/blog/entry/1614/heroes_without_medals)

MEMO TO ST. LAWRENCE DISTRICT CONGREGATIONS  
 FROM DICK GILBERT, SLD SOCIAL JUSTICE COORDINATOR  
 RE: SOCIAL JUSTICE WORKSHOP OFFERINGS 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 can 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? Not only for this election year, but 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 will explore 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 Anthem, “Spirit of Life,” are central to the task we face as justice-makers. This 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 will explore 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
- Up to Our Steeples in Politics: Campaign 2008 and Beyond
- Does the Earth Have Moral Rights? An ethical exploration of environmental justice.
- How Much Do We Deserve? An Exploration in Distributive (Economic) Justice
- Politics in the Pulpit – Possibilities and Pitfalls – The Real Rules for Campaign 2008
- 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](mailto: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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