

Womanspirit

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLORIDA DISTRICT

UU WOMEN & RELIGION COMMITTEE

Volume 6, Number 1

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Messages from the New Co-Chairs



From Emily Williams--

This week I have been reading *The Care of the Soul* by Thomas Moore, which is "a guide for cultivating depth and sacredness in everyday life." Moore speaks of love, jealousy, work, power, depression . . . and community. I, too, have been **thinking** about community. Moore says that the soul yearns for attachment, for variety in personality, for intimacy and particularity -- not like-mindedness and uniformity. "Belonging" is an active verb. We must actively seek community with sensitivity of the heart. We must hold ourselves together with our feelings of belonging.

W & R is a re-formed community in this sense. Ours is a community no longer defined by simple physical location (a town) or literal blood ties (a family). We have formed womancommunity.

In our community, we tend the life rhythms of the earth and soul. What happens within our individual lives and souls is vital to what happens within the whole. We are part of one another. No one unfolds to her fullest potential alone.

I would like to encourage us to see ourselves as an act of inclusion (another active verb). Let's actively reach out to women thirsting for spiritual community; to women who might not know yet that anything affiliated with Church can be a place of honoring and safe-haven. Let's reach out to women who are on the sacred path of motherhood, a spiritual journey which can be essential to a woman's development, a child's development, a community's development.

As W & R co-chair, I hope to get caught in the act -- caught actively including, actively belonging, actively being helped to unfold.



From Susan Stephenson--

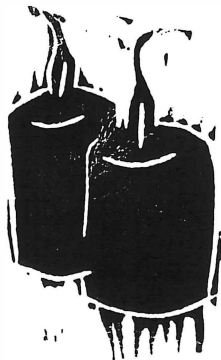
Perhaps you were there when I spoke of my vision for Women & Religion at the Summer Retreat last June. Much to my surprise, more than one woman has said, "I have trouble with that word, 'mentor,' that you used. It implies things that I don't like such as a lopsided relationship with one 'knowing' and the other 'not knowing,' or an implied power over." This has given me pause, for that is not at all what I had in mind -- nor what I was seeking for W & R.

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Susan con't.

Quite to the contrary: I imagined women joining each other in finding ways to express themselves more effectively both in groups and individually, personally, spiritually, and politically; finding ways to encourage the exploration of new, perhaps untried skills in Woman Circles all over the district; finding ways to experiment with those "outlaw emotions, thoughts, and desires for action; that women and other oppressed peoples often keep under wraps. I fully anticipated the free flowing pleasure of learning from each other -- taking turns, if you will, in who happens to be the more knowledgeable, or the more wise, or the more creative or spontaneous or precise in any particular interaction.

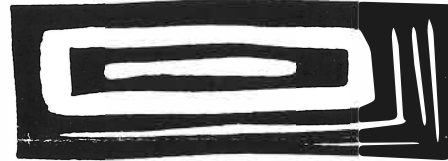
I hope that women and girls of all ages will participate in experiences of enhancement and empowerment that raise us to levels of understanding that we cannot reach easily alone. I anticipate Circles of Women all over the district that grow close and strong and come together to rejoice in and with each other at Retreats and Conferences. Too often I hear women say they have nothing like our weekend communities at home, that they "hang on" for these events to replenish them. I want our network to grow so no one feels isolated "out there."



Attention Area Reps:

We will have an Area Reps' meeting following the close of the Fall Retreat (to start about 11:00 a.m.). Please consider alternative times for these meetings -- before, during, or after the retreats and conferences.

Also, *please mark your calendars*, we will have an all-day gathering of Area Reps on Saturday, November 21st, or December 12th, location to be decided at the Fall Retreat meeting. If you have wishes for that agenda, please let us know then. Travel reimbursement is possible for this meeting only.



Womanspirit is the newsletter of the Women and Religion Committee of the Florida District of the Unitarian Universalist Association. It is published three times a year with occasional special issues.

Subscriptions are free to Unitarian Universalist women of the Florida District who attend Women and Religion Committee programs and to others by request.

Co-editors: Barbara Child
Amy Jo Smith

Send subscription inquiries, address changes, and all other correspondence to: Amy Jo Smith, 2417 NW 104 Ct., Gainesville, FL 32606. Phone (904) 332-1350.

Powerful Women Gather at the Pines!

by Ronnie Goodstein
and Diane Anderson

The word is out -- our women's retreats are stimulating, nurturing, thought-provoking, empowering and more, an event not to be missed. In June, more than 60 women from all over the state attended the Florida District Women and Religion Summer Retreat and packed The Pines. From the ingathering through the closing ceremony, we came together and created a safe space and spiritual environment in which to explore "Women, Power, and Process."

A highlight of the ingathering was a performance of the parable of the naked lady. Diana Fraser recounted the tale of women (adapted from a Bible story by U.U. women who are "creating a feminist theology") from diverse backgrounds whose clothing carried the burdens of society's expectations. They each became empowered by the naked lady's freedom from self-imposed oppression. The cast of women included Kathleen Pszeny, Carol Sievert, Susan Stephenson Hefte, Gloria Marvin, Jo Ann Lordahl, and Susan Pendergraft.

Dr. Martha ("Marty") Peters, our facilitator from University of Florida, helped us define what power means to us both individually and collectively. Through a series of group activities and tasks, we experienced the process of how and why women give away their personal power and the ways in which they can empower themselves.

Gloria Marvin did an outstanding job of providing music for the entire weekend. Those who love to sing got the opportunity to practice for a choir that lifted their voices at the closing ceremony. Dorothy Menadier and Lucy Swenson-Knights coordinated social hours and set out an elegant champagne reception to honor outgoing co-chairs Barbara Child and Amy Jo Smith.

Mary Louise DeWolf-Hurt led us on a "heroine's journey" Saturday night as she shared the herstory of Women and Religion with Marjorie Arnaldi and Diana Fraser. Stories included Barbara Child's moving account of being at Kent State and the difference between making people move and moving people. Jill Oldenski told the fable of "the woman from the sea." Diane Anderson took us into native times. Winny Ruffino shared her special storytelling talent, and Emily Williams held us all spellbound with her story of "Kali." It was a *night to remember*.

Tears flowed freely Sunday as we spontaneously moved into a spiral dance. As we looked into the faces of the women with whom we had shared so much, it was hard to say goodbye.

... SO BE IT ... AMEN ... BLESSED BE ...



The Fall Retreat -- "Circles of Women"

Just what is Florida District Women & Religion?

All around the District women are answering that question variously. This retreat will pull together a sampling of how we define ourselves and how we might stimulate new possibilities in each other. *If your society has been exploring women's issues (or just plain having fun) in a way you would like to share, contact Nancy Young, Retreat Coordinator. Phone 813/932-6582 or write her at 8009 N. 13th St., Tampa, FL 33604.*

This is what we have in mind so far --

- "Rise Up & Call Her Name," the new feminist theology curriculum, an introductory experience facilitated by Sarah Snyder.
- "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" revisited.
- Patty Callaghan and Emily Williams discussing books on feminist spirituality--and others telling of their feminist theology reading group.
- Mary Cadwell offering a circle on ritual in everyday life.
- An exploration of how we want to integrate mothering into W & R.
- A circle for new women on "What is it to be a UU?" Perhaps you have a friend interested in this one.
- Circles sharing the experiences of the "Spiritual Autobiography" weekends and the "Prophetic Sisterhood" study groups.

Let Nancy Young know if you would like to facilitate one of these circles.

PLUS we will have an Ingathering, a New Moon Celebration, and other surprises.

Remember that this is a retreat and, yes, there will be time to do just that: to retreat for some time by yourself or with old friends and new.

If you want to bring a drum, other musical instrument, your journal, your teddy bear -- please do. Whatever will make you comfortable and add to your pleasure in the weekend.

Tentative Schedule

Friday Evening, October 23, 1992

5:00 - 7:00 Registration
7:00 - 8:00 Dinner
8:30 - 10:00 Ingathering

Saturday, October 24

8:00 - 9:00 Breakfast
9:00 - 11:30 Circles of Women
11:30 - 2:00 Lunch & "Retreat Time"
2:00 - 4:30 Circles of Women
4:30 - 8:30 Dinner & "Retreat Time"
8:30 - 10:00 Celebration of New Moon

Sunday, October 25

8:00 - 9:00 Breakfast
9:00 - 10:30 Closing Circle
11:00 - 12:30 Area Reps meeting, all welcome



Florida Women Train for Conflict Management Team

District Co-Executive Mary Louise DeWolf-Hurt; Marian Chambers, Executive Director of Jacksonville Community Council, Inc.; and Barbara Child are having a week of conflict management training mid-September by the Alban Institute. The training will prepare them to serve on the Florida/Mid-South Districts' conflict management consultant team. The fourth member of the team, who is also receiving the Alban Institute training, is Wes Stevens, minister of the St. Petersburg Church.



Join Us In a Women and Religion Journal

How would you like to have an opportunity to showcase a piece of writing, a photograph . . . or a photograph of your art? Several women have a vision of such a special Florida Women and Religion spiritual journal. There is not room in this newsletter to include our bounty of talent . . . so let's have a special publication.

Plans call for this to be distributed in March at the annual conference. Further details will be discussed at The Pines at the fall retreat. Pamela Leavy, Nancy Young, and Jean Siegfried will be bringing further details and deadlines. We do know written pieces will have to be short (poetry/prose preferred) as we want to include as many Florida District women as possible. Work will not be accepted from outside our District -- this will be our journal, our voices, our spirit!

Spring 1993 Conference

Great News! The women and UU Church of Jacksonville, Florida have agreed to sponsor our Spring Conference the last weekend in March, 1993. If you have a workshop to offer at that event, please contact Carol Vogel, W & R Area Rep for Jacksonville: 904/399-4519. Thanks, Carol, for doing the work of getting it on the calendar.

How are conferences and retreats different from each other?

Our conferences usually offer a wide variety of concurrent workshops in areas of interest to women (political, personal, creative, spiritual, professional) and often a conference speaker of some renown (as was last year's Margot Adler or other speakers representing women's interests in the UUA). The retreats, in contrast, focus on a single theme -- such as "What Is Florida UU Women & Religion?" or last summer's "Women, Power, and Process." The retreats tend to emphasize the building of community and have the advantage of everyone living in the same place for the weekend. Both retreats and conferences seek to develop opportunities for women to connect with each other in meaningful ways and to network district-wide.

The Encircling Spiral of Sisterhood

by Pamela Leavy

The Clearwater Church was the scene Sunday, August 30, as Mary Poole, Connie Goodbread, and a circle of Clearwater women shared stories, led chants, and celebrated the "spirit of women" with music.

Sarah Snyder continues to guide the Seminole circle through "Rise Up and Call Her Name." This group of women shares so much herstory that the meetings are always rich with process, as well as rich with information. A special "Kali" evening included looking at as well as honoring our "dark side" and an empowering burning of fears.

Darlene Kalada, Diane Anderson, and Ronnie Goodstein are helping to sponsor "A Party for the Pines" Sunday, September 20, 4 to 6 p.m. at Brigit Books in St. Petersburg. Patty Callaghan ("Brigit") will be giving 15% of book sales on that date to The Pines.

Brigit's has been the site of Emily Williams' successful "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" in the secular community. Emily's other Cakes group, combining women from the St. Petersburg church and Seminole fellowship, also finished in August but the group will be gathering to discuss issues and celebrate with each other. A new Cakes group started at Brigit's on September 14.

The circle of sisterhood extended from Florida to North Carolina this summer as Pamela Leavy was at The Mountain with Women and Religion women for the Southeast Cluster retreat. Elisabeth Hoffman of Boca Raton led a beautiful "earth-centered" tribute to the Goddess at a sunrise Matin (first religious service of the day). Mary Cadwell (along with husband Bob) also led Matins, sharing the light of her grandmother's beads and Bob's "Simple Gifts" on the clarinet.

Florida ministers Liz McMaster (Fort Lauderdale) and Sylvia Howe (Boca Raton) were awe-inspiring as they blended "left and right side of the brain" messages and rituals into workshops and services.

Ironically, one of the workshops the cluster (including many folks from Miami area) focused on was saving our cities. The circle of sisterhood now extends from the St. Petersburg area to Miami and Dade County as our thoughts, money, and people power go out to our U.U. families (and all people) down there. The circle may be open but it is *never broken*. We wish you all healing and love and peace.



Book Reviews --
by Emily Williams

BACKLASH, The Undeclared War Against American Women, by Susan Faludi

If you have ever wondered why you don't feel comfortable calling yourself a "feminist" these days, this is the book to read. Faludi presents a convincing argument for how a powerful counter-assault on women's rights is working to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist movement has managed to win.

The Big Lie being told is that we are now in the "Post Feminist" Era. Women, we are told, have made it (per Madison Ave.) and the fight for "equality" is largely won" (*Time* magazine). It is no longer in to be feminist. In fact, it is not even necessary to be feminist now because women are so equal. We are so equal that we no longer need the Equal Rights Amendment.

We are told that we are also more miserable than ever. We are told that professional women are suffering from "burnout" and succumbing to the "infertility epidemic." We are told how single women are grieving from a "man shortage" and how childless women are depressed and confused.

What we have here is backlash. It is founded in misogyny. The message of backlash: American women are unhappy because they are too free; their liberation has denied them fulfillment.

If you have not noticed our culture manipulating you lately, or if you have wondered what all this nonsense about "post-feminism" is in the service of, this is a must read. But fasten your seat belt first, please.

EUNUCHS FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: Women, Sexuality and the Catholic Church, by Uta Ranke-Heinemann

Uta Ranke-Heinemann was the first woman to ever qualify as a university lecturer in Catholic theology. She is the chair for the History of Religion at the University of Essen (Germany).

It is said that the largest growing religion in the world is "Ex Catholic." Although this is not the main premise of *Eunuchs*, the book certainly gives insight into why.

Let me quote: "In Pope Siricius we find many typically Catholic features joined together: hostility to pleasure, leading to hostility to marriage, leading to celibacy, and in keeping with all of this, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth and Mary's perpetual biological virginity."

Heinemann also warns that Mariology (one of the saving graces of Catholicism for women, one might think) has been developed not by women, but by men, unmarried men at that. "These clerical celibates affirmed that their unmarried state, which they still call 'virginity' is superior to marriage. Mariology does not deserve its name. It has become a sort of anti-Mariology which purports to exalt the greatness and dignity of women while in reality, Mariology paints woman with clumsy fingers which crush that which constitutes feminine dignity in particular (Mary) and in general (all women.)"

She concludes her chapter on Mary with: "The gentlemen of the church wish to teach about her, not to be taught by her."

Eunuchs is translated (and not poetically so) from the German. By this I mean that it is not spellbindingly fast reading. It is mightily worth the effort, however. This book is powerful.

UU in the Pines Retreat Center

Women, many of us have come to think of the Pines as our special place to get away from the pressures of everyday life and have time to enjoy a beautiful natural setting, the company of good friends, and the exploration of new possibilities. Remember that very first W & R Retreat that Susan Stephenson and Andrea Schuver led right after the purchase of The Pines? Susan suggested that we claim ownership of The Pines, that we invest ourselves in making it our kind of UU place, a place that we would return to again and again. And so many of us have returned, and some of us now sit on The Pines Board, and some of us have become Life Members.

Well, a new category of membership has been created with many of you in mind. You can now become a member on an annual basis by contributing only \$60 or more. This entitles you to voting rights and an opportunity to serve on The Pines Board. The Pines surely does need your financial support at this time -- in fact, it is crucial. It could also use your skills, your "sweat equity," and certain donations. Please call Suzanne Gagan, Pines Director, at 904/796-4457, for information on how you can help.



If you'd like to come to the Thanksgiving Membership Weekend, it is open to Members, their families and friends of the Pines (you qualify). Elinor Elfner, of Tallahassee, has arranged for a fun-filled and interesting weekend beginning Friday evening, November 27. Call Suzanne Gagan for registration information, 904/796-4457.

* * * * * SERVING UU WOMEN IN THE FLORIDA DISTRICT * * * * *

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