

# REACHING SIDEWAYS

AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND IDEAS

Compiled by the Joseph Priestley District Women and Religion Committee

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Editorial Board: Sara Best and Jean Zoerheide

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## VOICE OF THE CHAIR

The Women and Religion Committee  
of the Joseph Priestley District

When I was reading the last issue of Reaching Sideways I was taken with the quote from Lucile Schuck Longview p. 14 "Each of us needs to know that we are not alone, that there are others around this continent who, as UU women, are reaching for the new vision." Just so, the Women-Religion Committee of the Joseph Priestley District have felt that for the present we in the district, as do women continentally, need to reach out and find connectedness with UU women. We are ever in need of empowerment. Networking helps us find empowerment.

The Networking Questionnaire last year was used as a means of finding out what women in our societies are thinking and feeling. The results are interesting and helpful in giving direction to the committee to determine the needs of the women in our churches and fellowships. (Thank you Marilyn Moors!)

It is indicated that many of us have need for finding connectedness, to other UUs, especially UU women. We have asked ourselves "What can we offer for the spiritual enrichment of our district women's daily lives?" There are few opportunities to make true friendships in big conferences. The Women/Religion Committee wishes to try another model for a time.

In October, a retreat, that was held at Murray Grove in New Jersey, was a "Happening!" Forty women from the Joseph Priestley District and the Metro-New York District came together in the congenial atmosphere of

Murray Grove which gave them the intimacy to connect with each other, to develop friendships - the opportunity to affirm each other. It was a wonderful experience for all of us.

September 20-22, 1985 we are planning a second retreat at Murray Grove, in New Jersey. Do join us! The warm glow of lasting memories and life enrichment still remains with me and has supported me through these months since.

There are developing programs and mini-conferences in areas of the District by local groups. The Women's Task Force of the Cedar Lane Unitarian Church; the Paint Branch Unitarian Church of Adelphi, Maryland Sunday Forums; the Baltimore, the Harrisburg, and the Buxmont Breakfasts; the Networking Supper Group held at the First Unitarian Church in Philadelphia are some of the opportunities for spiritual growth and outreach. Keep in mind that women of the world as well as in our communities need consciousness raising and support. The Committee is pleased to see these take off and give encouragement for other groups within our societies to develop similar programs and to be inclusive with others in the District to join in your endeavors. The Women/Religion Committee is developing a telephone tree so that word of such events can be passed along. Please notify us about what is going on in you society, your area, and your organization.

The Women/Religion Committee, as a Committee of the District has requested that it take an active part in the development of District Conferences. In April Peggy Orner will lead a workshop entitled "Women in Coalition." Women historically have given strength in our societies and in the denomination. If women work together in coalition - think what can be done! In coalition the integral parts need not lose their identity and uniqueness, but strength comes by joining together to reach a stated goal. Can we do this in our District? Come and participate in the consideration of this possibility.

Reaching Sideways is another opportunity for us to share our concerns and our feelings. Throughout the responses of the questionnaires it seemed evident that many of us are confronted with the question, "How can we raise the sexist issues in our congregations in a non-threatening way?" The West Shore UU Church found a way as reported in RS p. 9, "The Language of Feminism," by the Reverend Mr. David H. Cole.

WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS? Let us hear from you!

Kay Cox, Chair  
Women and Religion Committee of  
Joseph Priestley District, UUA

## THE COURAGE TO BE HUMAN: FEMINIST METHODOLOGY

-by Kate Lindemann

Editor's Note: The following article has been adapted from a theme speech delivered at the Joseph Priestley District Women and Religion Conference of March 31, 1984 at Baltimore. The limitations of space required that many lively anecdotes be eliminated. We regret this!

Dr. Lindemann is Professor of Philosophy at Mount St. Mary College, Newburgh, N. Y. She has also addressed the UU Orange County Fellowship. A Roman Catholic, she is a member of the Dominican Order. For those who wish to read some of her sources, the following are recommended:

Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Seabury Press, 1970,  
translated from the original Portuguese ms., 1968.

Robin Morgan, ed., Sisterhood is Powerful, Random House, 1970.

Everett Rogers, The Diffusion of Innovations, Free Press

JZ, Reaching Sideways

I'd like to begin by stating something clearly about feminists and feminist methodology. I believe a feminist is anyone, male or female, who is committed to overcoming sexism. Within the world of feminists there are very different views, conceptual frameworks. One very large difference is between feminists who would take the current social pie and make a new division of it and those who believe a new social system (the whole pie) must be created. If one accepts the concepts of the current social system, a feminist must learn the current ways of playing the game and get good at them.

I would like to stand with the latter feminists; but that is not the way I see the world. Dialogue must be continued, but for those of us who believe that for women, as for all men to become Subjects - to be "I's"- and to be treated as decision-making "I's" within the social system, it follows that the social system itself must change. The social system now operates so people make decisions for other people, whether those latter are conscious of it or not.

For feminists such as I, whether male or female, a feminist methodology is not only something we will develop, but something we'd better develop because the way we do something determines to a large extent what in the end is done, e.g., the fact that western science counts everything means western science comes up with certain explanations and certain sorts of things it can do. But other sciences that do not put

and society, and the world, in common reflection with others, and it has become one of the hallmarks of feminism. It is true that the second wave of feminism began with consciousness raising groups, but that is simply because it came out of the communal. From that framework, consciousness raising is done in a particular way.

In the '60's when dear Pope John XXIII opened the windows, we (referring to RC religious orders in community) sat down and began talking about our reality and completely restructured not only our laws but the ways we do things. Women who have done this together, reflected together, and acted together, wind up saying anyone may have the brilliant new idea, anyone may have the critical statement about it, and anyone may recognize the worth of an idea. The process of all these people acting various leadership roles and switching from one of those roles to another, very often in the same conversation, moves the group to the point when they say, yeah, that's what we're going to do. We call it consensus.

So, when I say feminist methodology is communal, I mean it is communal in a particular way. (It is also non-combative.) This notion of the consensual is central to the whole notion of the feminist team. Various leadership categories can shift, or may be assigned. For example, you may assign me, as you are now, to stand here talking, with the recognition that that is my function, and it is not a better function than - it is not a higher function than - your role as questioners. Without those questions, you would not have had this amount of talking. If we had had different questions you would have got a different amount of talking. Questioners are in one sense more central!

Within that communal is also the sense of the non-credentialed. Feminists always say listen to the truth of the person - and it doesn't matter whether they have credentials or not. If you read anthologies of feminist work, things like Sisterhood is Powerful, you have people who have no schooling, published with people with - they call them terminal - degrees. I have a terminal degree!

That notion of not needing credentials, not needing status symbols to wear, but rather to come out of the truth, is connected with another notion other than communal, and that is that feminists always contextualize their work. That word I've gotten from the Latin American liberation thinkers. I'd like to explain it. Feminists do it to prevent something evil from happening or to celebrate something good. Let me talk about the evil and let me use philosophy as an example.

Two years ago I was in Bogota at the Philosophy Liberation Conference, followed by an International Metaphysics Society meeting for

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which many European and North American thinkers were present. An enormous debate went on, because every time one of the Latin American Liberation philosophers would get up, he would begin by setting his context, saying, "I am out of the Peruvian context of \_\_\_\_\_," "I am talking out of dependent capitalism as it exists in Brazil." They would often economically contextualize what they were saying.

Europeans and North Americans would say, "This is not philosophy. Philosophy is about the universals: man, truth, beauty."

The Latin Americans responded, "When the Greeks started talking about beauty, truth, and man, what they were talking about was a white, free class of a particular maritime economy country. And they called that universal." And we have a long tradition of 'Natural Law Theory' which tended to see as natural those qualities of the dominant economic, heterosexual classes of Europe, but it was called universal philosophy.

I hear women philosophers and theologians contextualizing. It is very important that you know the context out of which I speak, that I am a white woman, from a working class family, that I was educated for professional class people, that I came out of a family with extremely needy parents, and that for forty years I managed to forget what existed in my home, and that I have only had the courage because I have had the network of support in the last seven to nine months to remember! If you understand that, you will understand my fury at my institutions: Was there no teacher who ever had an idea why a little girl was so quiet? Knowing that context, when you hear me rail, you will recognize the particularity it comes out of.

When I hear feminists talk, they start, "Let's hear who we are." Sometimes out of that we get a great sharedness and sometimes we get a consciousness of great disparity. That is our attempt to prevent the notion of the universal.

Secondly, there is the power of the particularity. There is enormous power of truth when you hear the truth spoken by someone out of the very being of lived experience. Even if another's struggle is very different from our own, we frequently catch a sense of ourselves there.

Another piece of methodology is seen in critiquing another's theory by the political implications of that theory, what it would mean to live it out. If the living it out means someone gets creamed, then there's something wrong with the theory. For instance, where did sin come from? That came out of an Aristotelian social political thought: males gave the life principle and the women gave nothing but matter during conception. Eve may have been the first sinner, but she wasn't the powerful

sinner. That theory lived out makes political ramifications. Feminists say there's something wrong with a theory that appears perfectly logical but has rotten consequences.

A second example from the history of philosophical thought concerns "form and matter" the notion that the male imprints the important on children: man gives the form, the spirit, the soul, the life principle; and women supply the egg, the matter which is then given life. That all connects to the denigration of women.

HOW DO YOU TEACH PEOPLE WHO THINK LINEARLY TO THINK ANOTHER WAY - LINKAGELY? I work hard on that with my students. You see I naturally think several thoughts all at once. I was a right brain person who became left brain to survive. When I was a graduate student facing comprehensive exams, I found out I was not using the kind of logic which the print media requires, which is one thing after another. I learned that logic. In my classes, I try to dialogue between right brain and left brain thinking. I let the students hear this operation and tell them what I am doing. You let people hear problem solvers think their way through a problem out loud. It is one way of teaching.

POWER: When I spoke of distinctive qualities, I don't want to say they are feminine qualities rather than masculine qualities. Many of the qualities I spoke of are common to oppressed people when they learn to utilize what is normal to them and try to operate out of that. If you have been an oppressed person, if you have managed to get the oppressor image out of your head as though that's human, you don't want to be in the position others were in in relation to you. So you work for something new. The qualities you make use of are communal, consensual, cooperative, questioning (asking for clarity), talking out of particularities, out of context, with passion. With great Passion!

People in power do not like passion. When a child screams in rage at what has been done to that child, the parent often wants to silence the child.

Power, the courage to be human! Some sort of network is crucial because otherwise you get so embattled that you have to set up so many defenses, your humanness can't hang out anymore. Given the mobility of women and the powerlessness of women, what many of us become more dependent upon is locating a kindred spirit person and getting together for 2½ hours over coffee; and knowing you may not see them again for three months. It helps a lot if you've got a more secure, solid base, but that's not something that oppressed people have been able to count on. One of the ways we get co-opted is thinking you really can't operate until you're secure. That is Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs:

the Latin Americans say, "No. We become human struggling for food, and if you leave fully human development to the top then none of us are ever going to make it." That psychological model fits a dominant society.

A second way of keeping power has to do with what I try to do in the face of criticism. I try to distinguish between the form and the content of criticism. If someone starts screaming at me or objecting, I say what is it they are trying to say? Also, what is it about them that caused them to select what they've chosen to say? The form of a critique always tells me about them and almost never about me. Their response tells me something about the way they feel most comfortable or most powerful.

A third area of empowerment is the recognition that both the oppressed and the oppressor are dehumanized. One of the great mistakes is to suppose that oppressors are wicked and the victims get off scot free. When we are honest, we know that in the process of oppression, the victims have compromised themselves - we have lived against principles we have deeply believed in - for survival! There is sinfulness, a dehumanization, that comes out of both of those frameworks. For me, that is an empowering thing. When my students call me on my racism, which is as built into me as my sexism, that is a gift. It is easier for me to hear that gift when I recognize that we are all caught in that dehumanizing thing. Unless we gift one another in that way we are never going to get on toward humanization. That's empowering!

- Kate Lindemann

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Editor's Note: The following article has been edited. - Sara Best

ON PREVENTING ABORTIONS

- the Rev. Alice Blair Wesley

I've just seen something odd.

Those making a case against abortion talk about a fetus and God. They say terrible things of an aborting woman. Then, as though they had named all the principals, they say the Supreme Court has taken a "tortuous approach."

They never MENTION the impregnating man! Now that's ODD.

Considering their words alone, one would certainly think God creates a fetus in a woman alone, entirely without the impregnating man who intended to emit sperm in the woman, and without whose sperm there is no fetus.

These people know the simple facts of sex. Yet when they come to



the subject of abortion, they reveal a curious and huge blind spot. They DON'T SEE the simplest fact of sex they know. God does not create a fetus in a woman alone. Where there is a fetus, there is also an impregnating man. HE intended something or other. Where there is an abortion, what he intended worked toward disaster. But these would-be moralists REALLY don't see his role.

To correct such weirdly deficient sight, we need some sharp focus on what the impregnating man intended. And on some other facts which explain how it is that his intentions, hardly God's, create havoc.

The following are simply facts. They make for tortuous and quite UNGODLY victimization of women. People who don't see how they figure in American abortions are morally purblind. And these would lead in territory where there are deep ditches. It's women who get shoved in.

WHERE THERE IS AN ABORTION --

# the impregnating man, whether rich or poor, married or unmarried, young or old, almost certainly intended ONLY to do as he pleased with his body and the woman's, without any mention whatsoever of a fetus.

# the impregnating man almost certainly intended to PRESSURE the woman into yielding her body and any plain sense she might have to the contrary, so that he could do as he pleased.

# the impregnating man almost certainly held it to be none of the Court's business and his RIGHT to intend, as the man in the song boasts he will teach a son, to "get 'round any girl."

# the impregnating man almost certainly practiced to learn to pressure the woman by patterning himself after models readily found in ALL forms of speech and art, but MOST readily in current American art, from the lowly soaps and sitcoms of prime time to critically acclaimed masterpieces.

# the impregnating man, laughing with other men EVERYWHERE, almost certainly rehearses, over and over again, stories of men's emission of sperm in women, without mention of a fetus.

# lastly, but far from least significantly, the impregnating man almost certainly used subtle and not so subtle advantages he has in his game, thanks to the woman's disadvantages in the ECONOMIC order.

These facts together make the iron hard Law of Sexual Custom in this confused land. When would-be moralists argue against abortion, they typically blaspheme notions of God's natural law and bless instead rigid customs of inequity and men's customary, sexually generic, cruelty to women

As in the illusions of a mirror, points are reversed, sides about. Holding up illusory principles, they reflect the impregnating man's intentions and mirror them precisely, sides about. They say nothing of anything

he said or did, impregnating. They talk much of a fetus he does not mention in connection with sex, ever. And then they bring in God and condemn the woman.

These purblind ones say that if his doing as he pleased ends in his impregnating the woman, the Court should not allow her to do as she may please and terminate it.

Truly, the case these pious ones make has little to do with any fetus BECAUSE it has nothing to do with ways in which a fetus comes into being. Theirs is befuddled moralism, not morality.

Beyond their confused understanding, their case has MUCH to do with the power of women to affect their own destiny and, therefore also, everybody else's. The struggle for anti-abortion law is waged in mortal dread of changes coming, now that some of us have begun to win a little of this power, even though most have not.

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Ah, but enough, enough vexation. I don't like abortions either. I never heard of ONE person who does. God knows they are hard for, and hard on, women.

If you want to prevent abortions, speak less of women and more to men. And teach the YOUNG men and women to honor the God-forged link BINDING two DIFFERENT things: the pleasures of responsible sex and, the fetus belonging to both.

Never fail, as the morally preposterous do, to mention both with one voice.

- The Reverend Alice Blair Wesley  
Newark, DE

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A LETTER TO MS. DOCTOR - WRITER OF AN ARTICLE IN RS

January 7, 1985

Dear Ms Doctor:

When I read your letter in the October, 1984, issue of Reaching Sideways, I was furious. Yes, we all have the right to express our views, but to have you, a sister Unitarian Universalist, say that middle-aged women ". . . should let the younger people take over the leadership. . . ." in the fight for women's liberation made my blood boil. I happen to be a middle-aged woman who intends to keep on fighting discrimination wherever I find it to the best of my ability.

I feel that you are out of touch with reality if you think that

"inequities in salaries" can be straightened out peacefully. As a woman who has won a sex discrimination suit against an employer, I know that the process is far from peaceful. Also, the example you gave of the young woman Assistant State Attorney is certainly not the norm. How many young women are Assistant State Attorneys and how many secretaries, clerks, etc. could get away with telling their bosses to let someone else get his coffee without being fired or retaliated against in some way?

Finally, your remarks about the women at the Baltimore church who burned the offensive statements from supposedly great philosophers and religious leaders shows how much you need to have your consciousness raised. The reason for "bringing all of this up again" is that the very foundations of our society and the "tapes" that we all carry in our heads are based on these statements of "wisdom." At the Women's Conference at Murray Grove this fall, I found out for the first time in my life how wonderful it is to identify with a female diety. I felt affirmed as I never had before. Maybe you should try it next time??

Sincerely,

Lois Goodwin

Wallingford, PA

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Editor's Note: Another commentary on Marianne Doctor's letter follows:

#### SISTERLY WAYS AND EFFEMINATE DAUGHTERS

I'm trying to write about the less-than-fully-feminine behavior tempting to women in this society that fails to honor femininity. I cannot find English words for my thoughts.

For example, we have no word for less-than-fully-feminine. Effeminate seems appropriate and is a logical counterpart to emasculate. However, men use both words for themselves.

As I struggle to express my thoughts, I realize that a compendium of "sexist language" could be infinite. Our language belongs to men. We have almost no words for women's experience. Most significantly, we have few words for our wisdoms.

Shirley Josephson(poet and thoughtful feminist) has found positive words for womanly conduct. She speaks of "trusting femininity" and behaving in "sisterly ways". Shirley's words are exquisitely effective at W/R Committee meetings. Among feminists, Shirley is able to implement her feminine wisdoms.

Conversely, among people who comprehend only men's meanings, Shirley's "femininity" and "sisterly" lack power. Prior to feminist maturity, we cannot perceive her words as a call to act with utmost ethical consideration. Shirley's words work only in a feminist context.

With semantics clarified as-best-can, I hereby give the editors of REACHING SIDEWAYS my Shirley Josephson Award for Sisterly Ways. In publishing Marianne Doctor's letter, you gave sisterly voice to a less-than-fully-feminine critique of middle-aged women feminists. To Marianne Doctor, I give my Effeminate Daughter Award for failing to honor herstory of sisters at the symbolic burning ceremony in Baltimore. Our sisters were honoring herstory of our mothers and grandmothers.

As women pass out of our mothers' homes into the society of men, effeminate temptations abound. Our mothers' teachings were by deed more than word. With only men's words to assist our memories, feminine deeds no longer performed are easily forgotten. In the company of pre-feminist brothers (whose self-esteem requires denying their own herstory), emerging women are tempted to declare ourselves without feminine heritage. We enter into an effeminate daughter phase in our maturing process. Unwittingly, we become women as most men perceive women to be - without the feminine consciousness that men deny.

Maturing into feminism is painful. Human consciousness resists recognizing betrayal. Rage and outrage sear our days of discovery. Anger is hell.

Fear not the fires of outrage, Marianne. On the other side are tears of sorrow for our lost legacy and tears of joyous renewal at its reclamation. Come into a new maturity of feminine affirmation. Discover sisterly ways that set free positive energies we cannot foretell. Learn of equality rising as women speak of ourselves in meanings of our creation. Wondrous lives are becoming as women find new ways of communing with each other and with men.

Bring you brothers too, Marianne. Women cannot mature men. Let your pre-feminist brothers hear men's voices celebrating women's wisdoms, decrying their own lost potential, and beginning anew. As women and men empower equality together, we are enabling new maturities beyond feminism. Ourstory begins.

- Viv Beckmann

West Chester, PA

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"THE HERETICAL RELIGION"

Excerpts from the  
Sermon Delivered by  
The Reverend Sylvia E. Howe  
at the  
Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, PA  
September 16, 1984

In many ways, the image of the butterfly is like Unitarian Universalism - the heretical religion. Not bound to the rigid confines of the past, we affirm that the process of change is inevitable and life giving. In unmistakable terms, we embrace the concept that religion, as an institution, is but a "temporary and tentative expression of personality frequently outgrown and must, like the hull of a chrysalis, be burst asunder." \* \* \* \* \*

Before we begin, I digress slightly. Today's sermon title may cause you to wonder what this has to do with butterflies. It does share some similarities because while we can look at events and issues which have shaped, and are shaping, our liberal religious identity, it is the voices of the men and women who give the movement the specifics of a name and a face.

The whole concept of heresy is an important one to keep in mind, because these leaders of religious change are often labeled heretic and that means us. For many the word heretic is one that elicits feelings of fear and anger, but for others it is a label worn proudly. The word "heresy" means I choose. I choose to believe, rather than the choice being made and forced upon me by an external source whether it be an institution or another person.

Unitarian Universalism is a heretical religion because its significant issues are identified with people who stood against the prevailing trend and said "I choose." \* \* \* \* \*

Today another group of people have stood before our congregations to say, "I choose." Today another butterfly of religious liberalism is about to be released. The butterfly of Feminism is developing as we sit here. The butterfly has yet to emerge, so we cannot describe the beauty and vibrancy of its colors. Nor do we yet know the dimensions of this delicate creature.

The embryonic message was heard in the long ago voices of our Unitarian and Universalist feminists. Their message of equality for women

stuck fast. Nineteenth century women like Susan B. Anthony, Olympia Brown, the first woman to be ordained by a denomination, Rev. Mary Safford, a leading light in the Iowa sisterhood; women who visibly demonstrated the capabilities of women clergy. All these early feminist voices called for and modeled equality for women. But this is a slow-developing egg. Though firmly attached, the caterpillar did not emerge for almost another century.

Then in 1977, the prickly caterpillar of feminism began to intrude in all our lives. At the General Assembly in Ithaca, the Women and Religion resolution was submitted for a vote by the assembled delegates. It resolved, in part, that the UUA should "examine the relationship between religious and cultural attitudes toward women." The resolution passed with a unanimous vote and the way was set for the growth and development of the Feminist caterpillar.

From that moment on, there has been increasing denominational awareness and commitment to understanding the shaping of all our lives through cultural and societal experiences. Conscious reflection on the importance of language has resulted in new materials for worship which use gender inclusive language. Barb Pearce called your attention to one when she asked for your financial support for new hymnals. Women are moving ahead as visible leaders of our denomination, both professionally, where 50 percent of the theological students are women, and with laity, with Sandra Caron, the current moderator, announcing her candidacy for the position of president of our denomination. At the 1981 General Assembly another change was suggested to the members of the assembly. This time it was not a relatively simple resolution; it called for a revision in the Purposes and Principles section of our Unitarian Universalist By-Laws, the fundamental statement of our denomination's self identity. It was placed in committee and received a preliminary vote at the 1983 General Assembly. Do you remember the furor it caused? Not only among our own members but in the general religious community as well, that we received notoriety via the June 27th issue of Time magazine. In the religion section, a less than sympathetic reporter wrote,

"The current campaign to delete the Deity stems from feminists, who feel the word of God reeks of old fashioned chauvanism."

This year at the 1984 General Assembly in Columbus, the debate was calm, the changes accepted and the vote was almost unanimous. When completed, it received a joyous, tearfilled, standing ovation.

The metamorphosis of our feminist butterfly is still in the cater-

pillar stage, its visible attributes cause cries of disgust and ridicule to be heard from many quarters. Those of us who value the life-giving process of change hear those voices as but feeble attempts to reclaim the past which no longer exists. We stick fast to the vision of our butterfly.

What will it look like? Only time will tell. Until then, we can dream and speculate and do our part by standing before the crowd to say, "I choose." The creation of this most beautiful thing is our legacy to the future.

As Unitarian Universalists we are like the ever-evolving butterfly. Our heretical religion, while acknowledging the ambiguity and disease of change, sees this metamorphic process as life-enriching. The wonder and glory of the butterfly does not occur without the preceding stages. Our liberal religion - the faith of the free - is committed to breaking out of the hard shell of the dogmatic past. I invite each of you to experience the freedom of the butterfly.

Thank you and Amen. - The Reverend Sylvia E. Howe

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Editor's Note: The June 1984 edition of Reaching Sideways includes the following Charge and Purpose of the Continental Women and Religion Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

"In order to implement the 1977 Women and Religion Resolution, the UUA Board of Trustees has appointed the Continental Women & Religion Committee. The members of the committee are chosen from the constituency of the UUA at large, as well as, from Liberal Religious Education Directors Association, Ministerial Sisterhood Unitarian Universalist, the Unitarian Universalist, the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association and Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation.

The Women and Religion Committee shall

- identify and name sexist patterns of thought, belief, behavior and practice which degrade the spirit, mind and body of women, men and child within the UU Association;
- explore and implement methods to reform and transform these patterns;
- create and promote programs, materials, networks and other support services that will offer hope and direction toward liberating ways of thinking, being and becoming;
- enable and inspire groups and individuals to develop their own bold and courageous responses to sexist thought and practices;

challenge the women, men and children of our denomination truly to affirm, defend and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and thus to change the structures and the distribution of power;

report to the UUA Board of Trustees and elicit from them response, counsel, and support. - The Continental W & R Committee, Chair, Rev. Tracey DeVol, & Rev. Jane Bramadat, Marinel Hartogensis, Janet Lutz-Smith, Corinne LeBovit, Rev. Linnea Pearson, Betty Sprague.

In an August 10, 1984 letter to the UUA W & R Committee, Meg Bowman and Gail Hamaker, Co-convenors of the Pacific Central District W & R Committee gave suggestions for the further consideration of the charge to the Continental Committee. Excerpts selected by the editor follow:

"We are concerned that this "charge" does not encompass what we consider the W&R Task Force's (Committee's now) reasons-for-being - as exemplified in the 1977 Resolution, the 1979 Resolution, and the results of both Grailville and East Lansing. We do not consider the Albuquerque Convocation to have been in the tradition of the two former convocations. Our immediate concerns are:

- 1) The "laundry list" of organizations from which members of the Continental Committee are to be chosen.

We understand the listing of "UUA members at large" but wonder at the need for a list of organizations unless there is a special emphasis of drawing from them.

The W&R Resolution and subsequent implementation was a non-organizational, non-establishment movement; it was grass-roots, whereby those women-in-the-pew, previously unheard and unorganized, were making their voices heard.

We wonder if perhaps the current W&R Committee's problems with the Task Forces out in the "boonies" is that the W&RC has become an establishment committee, not in tune with what is going on "out there" - and either not hearing or resisting hearing what those who started the movement and are continuing the W&R movement are saying and doing; or perhaps you lead by following - far behind. W&R was never intended to be a coalition organization.

- 2) The absolute absence of any "theological" charges in the "Charge to the Committee"



We consider this to be the basis of the entire 1977 Resolution; the reason for the W&R movement - not a movement of a coalition of existing organizations. Is it coincidence that two members of the W&R Task Force led workshops at the Mid-Decade for Women Convocation in Denmark on "The Effect of Religion on Women"!! - and that they were lay-women?

Is the UUA no longer dealing with this basic question?

Are we going away from consideration of theology?

Are women's issues of basic biblical, patriarchal, pre-and post-fourth-century-B.C.-to-A.D. materials, etc. being swept under the rug; not to have the light of scholarship and discussion explode and implode fallacies that underlie the current theological basis of what we keep hearing from our pulpits (and as currently are taught in our theological schools)?

It seems very strange that Elizabeth Cady Stanton 100 years ago organized the writing of the Women's Bible, that the W&R Convocations at Grailville and E. Lansing were centered on theological considerations, but at Albuquerque theological considerations were peripheral if present. Where at Albuquerque were the Naomi Goldenbergs, Mary Dalys, Carol Christs?

We are concerned that the make-up of the Committee as appointed by the UUA Board will determine the course of the work of the denomination in this field; lost in the past is the fact that the 1977 Resolution does not center on language (it's only a symptom), high office for women (again, a symptom), visibility of women (another symptom):

the resolution centers on the root causes of these symptoms.

And yet for the past two years, your work has been attacking only symptoms. As long as we have come-outers from other establishment organizations and representatives from other organizations (with prime loyalty to those organizations) the breakthroughs necessary to accomplish what we consider the real work of the 1977 Resolution will never happen.

The Committee needs creative, cutting edge, courageous people; visionaries and catalysts; this is not a management committee. It, to us, is not a "safe" committee; it should be radical, scholarly and challenging.

It is notable that the four most active W&R areas have not had members on the Committee these past two years (JPD, PCD, UDCM and PSWD), though all had people nominated. To us, this says something about where the Board's priority has been.

As said before, this letter was originally planned as a letter to the UUA Board and you for reaction to the "charges" of the communication of May 5. You, as members of the Committee, have been cautious in starting, we understand that; however, we hope that you will start now doing some of the cutting-edge, leading us to innovation, building on past Task Force's work.

Sincerely,

Meg Bowman, Co-convener

Gail Hamaker, Co-convener

San Jose, CA

Palo Alto, CA

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Editor's Note: Another letter was written to Rev. Tracey DeVol, Chair, Continental W & R Committee, UUA, on November 26, 1984. Excerpts follow:

"We are dismayed that we have not had any response from the Continental Committee or the UUA Board, who also received a copy. We were also disappointed to hear that there was no discussion on this subject at your October meeting. Did you ever see the letter?"

Since the charge to the Continental Committee is a charge also to the district committees, we feel shortchanged in our objectives as we aim to strive for more than the accepted charge offers.

We would like to hear what the Continental Committee says in response to our criticisms and how the Continental Committee will deal with them."

Copies of this letter from the PCD W&R Co-conveners went to Mary Rosa, UUA Board, UUWorld, GGash, and the Joseph Priestley District W & R Cmte.

\* \* \* \* \*

Editor's Note: Excerpt from a letter to RS from Jean Buesing, Children's Advocate, UU Womens' Federation follows:

"Included as a result of pressure from you, and hundreds of others across the country, the recently adjourned 98th Congress added at least \$1.5 billion to programs which help needy children and their families. The issues which have been the focus of our Network's advocacy, namely child health, day care, and child abuse, were among those receiving favorable action. The Child Health Assurance Program (CHAP) restored federal cuts in 24 states, where affected pregnant women were receiving no prenatal care before their last trimester.

The Headstart authorization includes a new block grant for School Age Child Care and Dependent Care Information and Referral; 60 percent of the \$20 million authorized for each of the next two years will be available for start-up of school age child care programs. However, the actual funding for this new grant must be appropriated by Congress next year. Congress also reauthorized the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act for four years, and provided states with \$25 million in additional Title XX funds for training child care workers on issues including the prevention of child abuse. This new initiative was developed by the House Select Committee on Childre, Youth and Families in response to the recent incidents of sexual abuse of children in day care centers.

Thank you all for your caring, commitment and hard work!

Besides affecting change on the national level, Network members have also made a difference locally. In Dallas, TX, Margaret Tresch Owen convinced a UUWF unit to take on a child advocacy project; and throughout the Southwest District, UUWF Board member Bernita Cogan has been recruiting Network members. In Hudson, MA, a UUWF unit led by Sharon Salmela and Barbara Jacks is advocating the training of local day care workers in the prevention of child sexual abuse. Throughout the country, Network members who are also mandated reporters for suspected child abuse, are cutting the red tape they find when they try to help children. In all, the number of people we have working out there, on our Network, has grown from 50 in January, 1984, to 100 today.

N. B. Any who are interested in joining the network are invited to contact Jean at the UUWF, 25 Beacon St. Boston, MA 02108, telephone (617)742-2100.

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#### CHANNING'S SISTERS (AND BROTHERS)

From the JPD W&R Committee: We held an all women's retreat at Murray Grove on a lovely October weekend. Forty of our UU women came. We came from CT, NY, NJ, PA, DE & MD. We came to renew and reinforce our common bonds. The results were great, and we all went home on a new high.

We "reweve the web of life" through the sharing of food, drink, thought and feeling. We were free to participate in various workshops and other activities or we could go off on our own.

Special highlights of the weekend for me were: Bea Swarms and Sue Grant's personal hospitality in cooking for us, catering to us, and Bea's sharing with us the story of Mary Potter, Mrs. Thomas, in the candlelit Thomas Potter House on Friday night; Sylvia Lewis' uplifting sermon on Saturday

night, followed by an outdoor candle procession; and our unique Sunday morning service.

Seven of us created this service where we sang non-sexist hymns, and read poetry written by our own Helen Crane and Shirley Josephson. And then, while Bea Swarm played the music to, "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder," on the Thomas Potter House organ, we sang the words to, "We Are Dancing Sarah's Circle." It was to these words that we held hands, sang, and did a weaving dance out of the church and around the yard. ( I know forty women that will never climb Jacob's ladder again)!

The weekend was such a success, that the JPD W&R Committee is planning another all women's retreat for September 20, 21, and 22 at Murray Grove. In addition, this year we will be participating in the Spring and Fall JP District Conferences, instead of having our own. The Spring Conference will be held at Columbia, MD on April 12, 13 and 14. I will be presenting the workshop, "The Power of Women in Coalition." I hope to see many of you there. - Peggy Orner, JPD W & R Committee

Media, PA

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From Paint Branch Unitarian Church:

COMING: A SERIES OF SUNDAY EVENING FORUMS  
January 27 thru March 10

"MYTHS & REALITIES OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT" will be the general topic of a series of four Forums on alternating Sundays, January thru March at the Paint Branch Unitarian Church, 3215 Powder Mill Road, Adelphi, MD, sponsored by the Adult Programs Committee. All of the four speakers are faculty of the Women's Study Program at the University of Maryland, an interdisciplinary program for men and women exploring sex roles and realities in literature, psychology, history, sociology and anthropology, and their effects on both women and men. Attendance by the general public is invited. No charge - free will offering taken.

- Jan 27 Dr. Claire Moses: "Why Has 'The Family' Become A Political Issue?"
- Feb 10 Dr. Mary M. Leonard: "Slaying the Dragons"
- Feb 24 Dr. Cathy Barnard: "Media Images of Men and Women"
- Mar 10 Dr. Carol Pearson: "Journey Patterns"

From First Church in Baltimore: For five years First Unitarian Church (UU) in Baltimore has held monthly Saturday breakfast meetings for women of the church where a network of spiritual support has been developed. We prefer the adjective spiritual rather than psychological, because our emphasis is on the power of religion to discourage or enhance personal strength and dignity.

Eating together, reflecting together, acting together, celebrating together may have as their foci the experiences of individuals, events in society, books we share, concerns for the welfare of women, or calendar events. For the solstice season we gathered natural materials from which we made ornaments to decorate the chancel tree grown and given by one of our women. We held a private ritual around the tree during which we observed the American Indian custom of asking permission of the tree's spirit to use its life. Then our personal reflections on the theme were followed by singing together.

Women come from as far as 40 miles to share in this vital group; one or two belong to other churches (UU) or other denominations. We deliberately invite guests from other faiths from time to time, to share their stories and hear ours.

- Jean Zoerheide,  
Baltimore, MD

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From the Unitarian Church in Harrisburg, PA: The All Women's Retreat provided the climate for two Harrisburg church members to cultivate the idea of a Northern Area Council Women's Breakfast one Saturday morning a month. An extensive mailing was sent out to individual women, women's groups, UU churches and fellowships in the Northern Area of the JPD.

The first breakfast was scheduled for February 2nd with high hopes for a meaningful monthly event! We'll keep our sisters posted on the process.

- Patricia Kelsey Green,  
Harrisburg, PA

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From River Road Unitarian Church in Bethesda, Md; The W & R Committee \* is hosting a series of programs on pornography. Following a Jan. 15 initial meeting, the committee formed a study group to meet on Tues. through Feb. Ms Mary Bailey, a pornography research analyst and member of the DC-based Feminists Against Pornography, is providing study materials and is available as a discussion leader. The group meets at 8:00 pm at River Road.

- Mary Bailey,  
Washington, D.C.

## EDITORIAL COMMENT: THE INVISIBILITY OF WOMEN

I am becoming increasingly sensitized to the fact that women are invisible within large groups of both sexes at meetings. Whether or not we are the numerical majority at large meetings of unfamiliar people doesn't seem to matter. In such groups we are invisible because we are not active participants at question and answer periods or at any other time when we should stand up and speak as individuals instead of maintaining the anonymity of our seats.

During three recent occasions I did not see a single woman ask a question or make a comment at meetings of mixed sexes. At two such meetings I myself broke the ice and asked a question toward the end of the meeting when it was obvious that no other woman was going to raise her hand to speak. At least one woman spoke at those two meetings. Me.

At the third meeting, I simply sat back and watched as at least ten men raised their hands to ask questions or make comments every time there was an opportunity to participate. Not one woman raised her hand or said anything publicly.

I am perfectly positive that many of the silent women had contributions to make to the discussion. I also know that each had a very "good" reason for non-participation. In fact, I know these excuses very well because I have used most of them myself at various times in my life. We women are afraid of making fools of ourselves. We do not think that we as individuals have anything to offer such a meeting. We secretly believe that ladies, like children, should be seen and not heard. We wish to avoid any resemblance to the caricature of the woman who talks too much. We think of ourselves as powers behind the throne and so cannot directly commit ourselves in public. We are too shy (a quality considered desirable in a woman) to have everyone look at us as we speak. We are sure that a question or comment from us in front of a mixed group indicates a lack of deference to males in general.

Male friends tell me that men who stray from the topic or who reveal their lack of knowledge are immediately criticized in an all male group. I have never seen a woman openly criticized by other women in an all female group, no matter what she says. We women are inclined to listen to each other sympathetically, to make criticisms, if we have any, behind the speaker's back, not to her face. By such tactics we women deprive each other of the opportunity to grow. We do not provide each other with immediate feed-back and so continue not knowing how we appear.

I hope that I do not seem to be making generalizations here, to be painting a stereotypical picture of men as active participants in a mixed group and women as passive. This is certainly not my intent. We women have been stereotyped sufficiently to last through the end of time. We also don't need any more reasons for feeling guilty about what we have done or haven't done. We assume too much guilt all by ourselves.

What I wish to suggest is that we become conscious participants in large groups of both sexes, that we understand such participation as part of our responsibility. Certainly meetings connected with our societies or denomination should offer us relatively safe opportunities to practice giving our views. As the sexist assumptions about women begin to break down, we women, all of us, must take our part in the mainstream of our community lives.

Sara Best,  
Chevy Chase, Md.

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#### YOU AND THIS JOURNAL

We thank you for your generous response to our request for contributions. We offer special thanks to the Women's Issues Task Force of Cedar Lane Unitarian Church for their generous gift of \$200.

To all of you who have responded with contributions for the calendar year 1985, we pledge to continue the task of communicating with each other on a continent-wide basis in REACHING SIDEWAYS.

To those of you who have not yet made your contribution, or are seeing an issue for the first time, may we suggest:

\$4.00 covers the direct expenses of getting three issues to you with all-volunteer workers.

\$10.00 allows us to send copies to UU officials who may not subscribe but to whom you wish to send our message.

Please send the information listed below with your contribution: NAME, STREET & NO., CITY, STATE and ZIP CODE.

Make out your check to: Tom McHugh, Treasurer, REACHING SIDEWAYS  
Potomac, Md.

**SPECIAL NOTICE TO WRITERS:** April 17, 1985 is the deadline for the receipt of your material for publication in the next issue.

Joseph Priestley District, UUA  
Women and Religion Committee  
9601 Cedar Lane  
Bethesda MD 20814

Address Correction Requested

