

# REACHING SIDEWAYS

AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND IDEAS

Compiled by the Joseph Priestley District Women and Religion Committee

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## A THEME FOR THIS JOURNAL

Grace H. Simons of Los Alamos, New Mexico suggested to us that we try a theme for our next issue of this journal as a "way of generating a greater volume of input from the country." We like the idea very much! One of our goals for REACHING SIDEWAYS is to have as many writers from as many different parts of the continent as possible. We are convinced that each of us has a great deal to share and can benefit greatly by reading what our sisters and brothers have written.

We are, therefore, promising that the next issue of this journal is to have a theme. We ask that our readers write to us on this question:

SHOULD MEN BE INVOLVED IN THE WORK OF THE WOMEN & RELIGION COMMITTEES?

When you read the mini-minutes of the UUA Continental W&R Committee (in this issue) you will learn that their discussion of the possible involvement of men led them to the conclusion that they would not recommend such a move this year. According to their minutes, this topic was to be further discussed in October at their meeting in California. For them, the two ultimate questions were:

1. Are there skills that are necessary to the Continental Committee that only men can offer?
2. If men are not involved in the work of the Continental Committee, what will be the future of Women and Religion?

Now it's time to hear from you. Please notice that we have expanded the topic. We ask you whether men should be involved in the work of the Women & Religion Committees, not only at the Continental level, but also at the District and local Society levels. We'll print as many responses as we can possibly manage. We also reserve the right to edit them for clarity or brevity. Our deadline for the next issue is January 15, 1986. Please mail to: Sara Best, Editor, 5211 Saratoga Ave. Chevy Chase MD 20815.

We are also considering a theme for our May, 1986, issue. This topic is not yet cast in brass, so we would welcome your comments, and or ideas for future themes. We are thinking along the following lines:

SERMONS ABOUT WOMEN'S CONCERNS THAT I HAVE NOT HEARD or  
SERMONS I WANT TO HEAR(and  
my minister doesn't address).

Please do not hesitate to give us your ideas for future themes. We need them. . .and you!

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A LETTER FROM THE REV. WALTER ROY JONES

Editor's Note: Our correspondent was the Chair of the Committee to Revise our UUA Purposes and Principles. The hard work of the Committee achieved final success by the positive vote of two General Assemblies so that we now have amended that section of the denomination's Bylaws. The following paragraphs are part of his letter written in answer to our invitation. His comments are addressed to the editor of REACHING SIDEWAYS. In part, they are:

"The work of the Committee is finished. But I need hardly tell you that yours is not. If the energy of the Second Feminist Revolution seems at the moment to be in a temporary lull, and the land be swept up in a wave of regressions of many kinds, we must not allow the complacent loss of gains which gradually followed the First Feminist movement to recur, nor the momentum of the '70's to dwindle away.

Lying at the heart of the feminist critique of our patriarchal society, it seems to me, is the need for all of us to discover the primacy of personhood, as a perspective from which to evaluate social and technical instrumentation. This is not to ignore our place in the larger web of existence, but to acknowledge the special responsibilities which fall to us because of our focussed, although still limited powers within that web.

This is perhaps the most insignificant change in the new Statement of Principles. The place that the intellectual "search for truth" occupied in the earlier statement, has been taken by an affirmation of the worth of persons. For while a search for truth would indeed lead to the recognition of the worth of persons, it is even more important to see how the worth of persons undergirds and makes possible an authentic search for truth (or wisdom and insight). Both elements of the principles are still present; it is the balance which has shifted. The women's movement led the way in this perception. We are all beneficiaries."

## UU WOMEN AT UN CONFERENCE

by Rosemary Matson

Three of us from the Pacific Central District - Meg Bowman, Patricia Schroeder and I - went to Nairobi, Kenya in July for the United Nations END OF DECADE FOR WOMEN CONFERENCE and the accompanying non-governmental FORUM 85. We took one hundred women with us, nineteen from this District.

With departures from New York and Chicago, as well as San Francisco, our entire group came together for their first stop: four days in London - with a visit to Greenham Common Peace Camp, the Feminist Herstory Walk and other sights and sounds of the City.

In Nairobi the focus of both United Nations conferences was the "progress" - or lack thereof - in the past Decade, for women around the world. All of our group were registered at the FORUM, some presenting workshops and several with press credentials covering both meetings.

The Nairobi Experience, with its kaleidoscope of colors, costumes and the hubbub sounds of foreign languages as an unexpected 14,000 women came together from all over the world, was almost an overpowering one. Filling the great grassy court surrounded by modern classrooms of Nairobi University, women gathered, talked, sang and danced for each other. In one corner was the blue and white striped peace tent where any woman could speak her mind to a receptive audience.

One hundred workshops a day to choose from presented a constant dilemma. There were also women's films to see, exhibits to browse, rallies to attend, and marches to participate in. Trips to the rural villages were an added bonus.

To complicate matters, on arrival thousands of women discovered that the Kenya government had usurped all hotel accommodations in order to provide rooms for incoming "official" delegates. A great scrambling took place and our group quickly arranged for dormitory rooms at Kenyatta College 18 miles from the city with buses to shuttle us back and forth. Our accommodations were clean, sparse and simple. The staff was friendly. It was beautiful and quiet and suddenly we were glad we were in the country.

A sense of solidarity emerged as the week wore on. Our commonalities overcame our differences. Progress had been made during the Decade, many nations had taken steps to improve the status of women, women were more politically sophisticated, literacy among Third World women had improved, issues like genital mutilation and battered women were now

being discussed openly. Still, so much was yet to be accomplished. Easily, the End of the Decade turned into a New Beginning. Forward-Looking Strategies were adopted which will carry women's efforts into the 21st Century. We are on the move. The world will never be the same.

By the close of the FORUM, the Nairobi Experience was truly felt by most to be a life-transforming one. "This African pilgrimage," said Beverly Allen of Arcata, "may prove the catalyst of my life."

The feeling that the media coverage of this momentous event was inadequate and oft-times inaccurate, was unanimous. The women participating all vowed to share their experiences with any and all who will listen. Many have slides to illustrate their words. They anticipate your invitation.

- Rosemary Matson, Carmel Valley CA

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EXCERPTS FROM A COMMENTARY BY F. J. PETTIJOHN

Delivered at the May 19, 1985 25th ANNIVERSARY SERVICE  
of Towson Unitarian Universalist Church, MD

We live at a time when we are under attack by religious fundamentalists many of whom do not really believe in the Bill of Rights. We live in a time when searching for and building mutual trust in international affairs is replaced by inflammatory rhetoric. We have become locked into a "we-they" syndrome - "good guys" versus "bad guys."

And those of us who thought the battle over evolution and public schools ended with the Scopes trial at Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925, were mistaken. A militant "moral majority" whose concern for life begins at conception and ends at birth, would impose its will by intimidation, even violence, and, if they could, by constitutional amendment.

This is a time when many of the things we took for granted are challenged and many of the battles we fought have to be won again. Need I say more? The need for a liberal church today is greater than when the Towson Unitarian Universalist Church was founded 25 years ago.

Will we lack courage and bend with the times or be steadfast and true to our ideals? Will we continue to be a liberal church when "liberal" is a dirty word. And what kind of a church will we be? Will we be one of strife and disruption, or vindictiveness? or one of tolerance and forbearing - even of forgiveness?



## WOMEN AND RELIGION CONCERNS

(from a pre-election platform statement  
by our UUA President, William F. Schulz.)

The prestige and resources of the UUA should be mobilized in advocacy of the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment at the earliest opportunity.

I am prepared as President to model a non-patriarchal leadership style. Such modeling will include the use of women's words and imagery in my writing and speaking; the inclusion of the perspective of women in decision-making; efforts to diminish the hierarchical nature of the Association and to increase the collaborative; and a ready willingness to admit mistakes.

I would make every effort to help strengthen the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation (UUWF) and the ties between the UUWF and UUA.

I will appoint a member of the UUA Women and Religion Committee (or someone recommended by that Committee) to the President's Religious Education Advisory Committee (to insure that women and religion values are reflected in our religious education program);

I will also encourage the appointment of persons recommended by the W&R Committee and the UUWF to the hymnal commission (to insure that our new worship resource reflect women's spirituality, words and songs).

A compilation of worship materials -- quotes, readings, and liturgical forms -- (in addition to the hymnal) by women and reflective of women's experience is needed in order that worship leaders have ready access to materials with which to make services more inclusive.

The editorial focus of the UU WORLD, the programs of our theological schools, and the requirements of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee should be reviewed regularly to encourage sensitivity to women's needs and concerns.

## WAS THE FIRST FEMINIST A UNITARIAN?

- Louis W. Jones

Unitarian Universalists seem unaware of an important historical figure who exemplified the freedom of religious thought and inquiry which they today value so highly.

We honor Dr. Joseph Priestley but are unmindful that a literary associate of his also helped to liberate people's minds from the shackles of church dogma and authoritarianism.

This individual almost 200 years ago argued against the imposition of religious belief on another; against the blind acceptance of institutional orthodoxy; against the "wild tradition of original sin;" and, further, decried "slavery to forms which make religion worse than a farce." The provocative words of this person ring out even today: "Religion...how has thy clear stream been muddled by the dabblers!"

### This Person Was a Woman

She wrote a book that was widely read in both Europe and America and is still being studied and quoted extensively. Historian Henry Noel Brailsford has said the book was "perhaps the most original book of the eighteenth century."

Historians generally have ignored her, but there are now 28 biographies in print and more are on the way.

Her principal biographer, noting the woman was born an Anglican, writes about her "spiritual shake-up," her doubts about "revealed religion," and her later conversion to a "new faith." "She preached rational religion," he says.

Another respected biographer says she saw doctrinal Christianity as a "fable" and the work of priestcraft.

### Her Name?

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), author of Vindication of the Rights of Woman.

Today she is universally regarded as the originator of the women's movement, but what is overlooked is the fact that her writings amount to a crusade for religious liberalism.

(Note: Wollstonecraft was not the author of Frankenstein. That was her daughter, who was the wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley, the poet.)

Wollstonecraft's name would probably be included in any list of persons who have made a great impact on history. Michael H. Hart, for instance, in his Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History, (1978 A&W Publishers, 95 Madison Ave., New York 10016) includes Wollstonecraft. Priestley is not included.

### The Right to Think Freely

This young self-taught Englishwoman was probably the first person in history to proclaim that every human being, male and female alike, has a right to have a mind and to think freely with it. She advocated a religion that combines faith with reason, and morality with knowledge, and which places no limits on human inquiry. "I submit to the moral laws which my reason deduces," she said. "It is not to an arbitrary will, but to unerring reason."

The thing that distinguishes Unitarian Universalism is its insistence on a faith based on freedom of thought and reason. The words "humane rational church" are hers, and she underlined the word humane. This view, according to Unitarian historian Earl Morse Wilbur is the hallmark of UUism. "Almost from the first," he writes, "Unitarians laid strong emphasis upon the importance of religious freedom and asserted the rights of reason in religion." He says this is the view of "Unitarians who best understand their movement."

### She Took a Stand

Many Unitarians know that Martin Luther took a stand against the authority of the Pope in 1521, and that Michael Servetus in 1531 took a stand against the doctrine of the Trinity, for which he was later burnt at the stake. They may not be aware that in 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft took a stand against centuries of Judeo-Christian teachings that woman has no separate moral identity, and that it is only through a husband that she has any spiritual relationship with the Deity. She was first to denounce that teaching, which persists in some measure even today.

### Do Women have Souls?

In Wollstonecraft's time there was even some question whether women were part of humankind, or that they had souls. Milton, for instance, referred to them as "fair defects of nature."

Jacques Rousseau, the staunch advocate of human and political rights, declared that women had no role as human beings apart from their relationship - a subservient one - to men.

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that "woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates."

And Paul in the New Testament preached that women must be silent in church and learn about religion solely from their husbands.

### Woman as Co-equal Partner

Wollstonecraft declared that a just God could not have created one human being superior to another; that morality must be the same in everyone; and that the faculty of reason is not exclusively a male attribute. She declared that as a spiritual woman she was as close to the Deity as any man. Hear her now;

"Gracious Creator of the whole human race!...Can woman believe that she was only made to submit to man, her equal, a being, who, like her, was sent into the world to acquire virtue. Can she consent to be occupied merely to please him?..when her soul is capable of rising to thee? And can she rest supinely dependent on man for reason, when she ought to mount with him the arduous heights of knowledge?"

Question: What about the various Scriptures that say woman is a helpmate to man (Gen. 2:18 for instance)? The answer is that male bias may have affected the translation, because a 1983 news item reports the finding by a biblical scholar that the word "helpmate" has been mistranslated; it really meant "power equal" in the original Hebrew (AP Feb. 16, 1983).

Did Wollstonecraft seek female supremacy? Not at all. She said, "I do not wish women to have power over men, but over themselves." All the failings of womankind, and she conceded there were many, she attributed to the tyranny over their minds by men.

"Who made man the exclusive judge?" She asked.

Wollstonecraft wanted woman to be independent - as one man is independent of another, she explained. She envisioned a society where women could work alongside men as co-equals in every pursuit, "never forgetting the science of morality."

### Was She a Deist?

This English citizen, who at one time planned to emigrate to America, believed in God - a God of reason, of humanity, of nature, and of love. She frequently referred to a Supreme Being, the Creator, the First Cause, and her writings are sprinkled with allusions to the Bible. Her beliefs were close to Deism, but, as one biographer notes, her religion was distinctively her own. She voraciously read the works of opinion-makers of her era and then fashioned her views. An intensively spiritual woman, she believed fervently that the Creator put the unique stamp of



his own dignity and worth upon us all, man, woman and child alike.

Hostile critics linked her ideas with those of Thomas Paine, Joseph Priestly and Richard Price, noted free thinkers. Wollstonecraft no doubt gained her questioning attitude and outspokenness from her close association with these honored Unitarian forbears, who often met and dined upstairs over the London publishing house of Joseph Johnson, her sponsor and a distributor of Unitarian literature.

Both Priestly and Price befriended her, and biographers say her moral philosophy was very much the same as Price's. Paine's writings and those of Wollstonecraft bear remarkable similarities. Paine was burnt in effigy in England for his radical writings, and there was public talk about inflicting the same ignominy on Wollstonecraft.

#### Wollstonecraft's Legacy

The full extent to which Wollstonecraft's writings influenced succeeding generations may never be learned. We do know that John Adams and his wife Abigail both read her works. John teased Abigail about her becoming a "disciple" of Wollstonecraft, according to a recent biography of Abigail Adams (DEAREST FRIEND, by Lynne Withey, Free Press, 1981.)

Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton dedicated their book on WOMAN SUFFRAGE to Wollstonecraft.

Mary Wollstonecraft endured calumny but was never vengeful or abusive. She never spoke ill of anyone. In the closing weeks of her short life, she said, "Those who know me know I acted from principle."

She wanted to see co-equality for women not for its own sake but for society as a whole. Stop wasting a precious asset, she said in effect.

No history of religious liberalism is complete without foremost mention of Wollstonecraft. She lit the beacon for a free faith when it was perilous to do so. Sensitive to the longings of humankind, she argued for an ever higher morality and an ever expanding social conscience. She preached salvation by virtue alone. Her many writings sound like UU sermons and have extraordinary relevance today.

I have dozens of inspirational quotes which I shall be glad to send to anyone on request.

Louis W. Jones,

San Mateo CA

## WOMEN AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 1985.

Report to the Women's Issues Task Force of the  
Board of Social Concerns, Cedar Lane Unitarian Church

Jewell McHugh

At a time when the news media are daily calling attention to the problems of women in our society, one would expect that a socially conscious religious denomination would address women's special concerns. However, General Assembly (GA) 1985 seemed to be oblivious to needs identified by the Women's Issues Task Force (WITF). My experience at GA and an analysis of the GA program show that these concerns were addressed superficially or not at all.

Of the 90 workshops, only six were specifically directed to women, none to men, and none to the relationships between women and men. This indicates a lack of concern on the part of our denomination for the problems of women in our society. During GA other groups were giving recognition to these problems. For example, men in cities across the country were holding demonstrations condemning violence against women. What was happening at GA? Three of the six workshops for women related to feminist theology or to the origins of the oppression of women, one dealt with "Finding Our Foremothers and Using Their History," one presented an attorney's discussion of the impact of anti-pornography ordinances on First Amendment rights, and one was for lesbians. (In addition, there were three other workshops for both lesbians and gay men.) The workshop on anti-pornography ordinances was scheduled in conflict with a hearing on the UUA budget. Two other workshops for women were in conflict with a resolutions hearing which official delegates were expected to attend. All workshops, including the remaining workshops for women and the workshops of general interest, such as those on advocacy, social justice and economic rights, which might have related to WITF concerns, were either in conflict with these hearings or were after 4:30 PM on Thursday or Friday, days which were filled from 8 AM to 10 PM with meetings and programs.

The general program of 78 events, including alumni meetings, worship services, entertainment features and special sessions for affiliates, provided even less coverage of women's issues than the workshops. There was a Ms. UU dinner for members and their guests to honor the award winner of a sermon on UU Woman. There was a UUWF Ministry to Women Award Celebration honoring "Women in the Pews" which was held at

the same time as two entertainment features and three lectures. Also, there was a monologue in which a costumed presenter told the life story of Dorothea Dix in the words of the great reformer. At the same time, however, Andrew Young, now Mayor of Atlanta, was speaking at the Cambridge Forum Colloquium on God and the Modern World. Part of his discussion dealt with sexism and with relationships between women and men. This may have been the only reference at GA to this aspect of people's lives.

The most disappointing aspect of the week was the dearth of programs featuring outstanding women. An exception to this was the Ware Lecture featuring Shirley Chisholm speaking on the Struggle for Peaceful Conflict Resolution. By her presence as the speaker and by the contents of her address, she was an inspiration to all in the audience, especially the women. In another event, the Urban Church Coalition speaker, Rev. Joan Campbell, National Council of Churches, addressed concerns regarding women, children and minorities who "bear the brunt of suffering as poverty in the U. S. increases," and raised questions about actions we can take to respond. However, this talk was scheduled in conflict with the open hearing on the UUA Task Force on Social Responsibility which has been asked to make recommendations regarding organizational structure, policies and procedures within the UUA.

In the business sessions, women were not recognized for what they have accomplished, and the resolutions which were considered did not touch any aspect of women's special concerns. Attempts to modify items to include women's concerns were summarily rejected. For example, a woman's right to choose abortion was included in a list of specific items added to the resolution that dealt with separation of church and state. There was some disagreement on the wording, and the Assembly voted quickly to drop that item from the list instead of allowing a brief addition of time to clarify the phrase. The outstanding accomplishment of the business sessions was the revision of the Purposes and Principles sections of the Bylaws. Although recognition was given to many people who had contributed to this, none was given to the women who had initiated the development of the more inclusive statement until after a reminder was sent to the platform! Just before adjournment the Moderator finally called upon all who had attended the Grailville and East Lansing Women and Religion Conferences to stand for recognition of their work.

The overall atmosphere of conversations during the week was oppressively prejudicial and especially sexist. Because unnecessarily large blocks of time were set aside for campaign speeches, there was little time before Thursday for thought-provoking programs or events.

Candidates, especially those for the presidency of the UUA, were the main topic of conversation. Usually I enjoy exchanges about qualifications and job requirements, but the talk was not like that. Most delegates couldn't say why they were voting for someone; the reasons they gave did not address the office itself. Answers were sexist, "We don't need two women in top positions," or "I'm voting for her because she's a woman;" anti-youth, "He's only thirty-five;" patriarchal-sexist, "We need a man in charge," irrelevant, "She's a lay person," or "Wouldn't Bill be great on the Donahue Show;" or authoritarian-sexist, "A minister should lead a religious body." Since two out of three voted for William Schulz, I heard more comments for him than for Sandra Caron.

The greatest disappointment for me in GA 1985 was that many of the women who have led us and supported women's causes were not there. This made a major difference in informal sessions, in programs, and in business sessions when resolutions were being considered. One of the major reasons for their absence was the location. Years ago the General Assembly passed a resolution against holding such meetings in a non-ERA state. Even though ERA is no longer up for ratification, General Assembly has not rescinded that action. Georgia has not added an Equal Rights Amendment to its state constitution, and some UU women refuse to spend money in a state which denies women equal rights. Also, the conference was expensive. It was estimated that we spent over \$1,000,000 in Georgia. Basic costs for a room, food and registration, excluding transportation, were over \$500. Employed persons lost a week's pay when they attended. Child care added to the expense. Many students and teachers were still in school, and other employed persons could not take vacations until later in the Summer. Considering these factors, it is not surprising that the delegates tended to be ministers, many of whom have travel and conference allowances, their spouses, and retired persons.

At GA it was difficult for like-minded persons to get together. The headquarters hotel, and engineering marvel with its quarter-acre lake and four-level lobby, elevators, escalators, stairs and high narrow walkways, did not have suitable areas of sufficient size for people to meet informally and conveniently in order to mingle and talk. There was no place to post a notice about a meeting or a cause. Because of the crowds, elevator service involved long waits. Getting from one room to another sometimes involved very time consuming transfers from one elevator to another. There was no adequate space for women to meet, examine books and publicity materials, exchange program ideas, and discuss common concerns. President Pickett said in his Annual Report that General Assembly programming for Women and Religion includes "provision of a resource room." The only such place I knew of was used for sleeping quarters.



If this was the resource room it was not conveniently located nor freely available at all times. I don't remember seeing a Women and Religion table in the display rooms.

After GA I felt depressed and did not know why, so I began this analysis. I accomplished most of the tasks I needed to perform at GA. It should have been a good meeting. As I analyzed this, a pattern emerged that reminded me of the growing-up experiences common to all women. We are told, "Be independent. Think for yourself. Stand up for your ideas, etc., etc." But we are also told, "Be sweet. Keep smiling. Don't be aggressive. Speak softly, etc., etc." General Assembly 1985 was the same old tired double-talk. We had an enormous number of programs and workshops, but few were geared to our needs and most, scheduled in conflict, were impossible to attend. We had a resource room, but it wasn't easily available. The Principles and Purposes were revised even better than we had hoped for, but women were recognized only belatedly and feebly. The delegates would not pause to add to a resolution a statement about a woman's right to control her own body, but they voted overwhelmingly for a presidential candidate whose campaign statements emphasized challenges to the Moral Majority.

From the standpoint of language, songs and jokes, GA was not overtly sexist. But the failure to acknowledge, let alone address, women's special concerns, indicates a profound disregard for our own statement of Purposes and Principles.

- Jewell McHugh,

Potomac MD

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COMMENTARIES ON THE LAW OF ENGLAND author, Sir William Blackstone, long an authority used by English and American lawyers, wrote, in 1765: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: That is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage... A man cannot grant anything to his wife, or enter into covenant with her; for the grant would be to suppose her separate existence; and to covenant with her, would be only to covenant with himself; and therefore it is also generally true, that all compacts made between husband and wife, when single, are voided by the intermarriage."

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Dr. Benjamin Rush's advice to a young woman about to be married in the 18th century wrote, "...from the day you marry, you must have no will of your own. The subordination of your sex to ours is enforced by nature, by reason and by revelation. Of course it must produce the most happiness to both parties."

## WOMANSPRIT RISING

(Excerpts from a summary of the minutes of the UUA Continental W&R Committee meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, June 13 - 23, 1985, at GA.

The planning of A Gathering: To Garner Our Past, To Create Our Future, to be held in Redwood City, CA on Oct. 11 - 13, 1985 was an important consideration of this meeting. Participants included the chair of W&R from each UUA District (or a Deputy). A young person, either staff or volunteer, was to be invited. The goals of this meeting were as follows:

- Review progress on implementation
- Plan future implementation
- Strengthen district network
- Enhance district cooperation
- Deal with UUA Comm.- District comm. concerns
  - Evaluate district structures
    - how District Chairs are chosen
    - how Continental W&R members are selected
- Open up cooperation with UUWF at all levels
- Encourage women working together
- Focus on the practical: ideas, programs, action
- Listen to district reps & input they bring from others

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- Where does feminist theology, feminist spirituality "fit"?
- Continental W and R topics to discuss
  - roving program
  - educational materials (e. g. glossary)
  - district structures
  - involvement of men

Program for this meeting was to include the general topics of Garnering Our Past and Creating Our Future.

Long Range Planning for the Committee included the following Task Group Assignments:

UUMA AND THE USE OF LANGUAGE: the three ministers on the Committee (Bramadat, DeVol and Pearson) were to prepare a suggested resolution about the use of inclusive language, and ask the UUMA to adopt it, or a reasonable facsimile thereof. Such a resolution would go to their meeting this year for discussion, and would be up for vote next year.

BLUE RIBBON PANEL idea was presented to Gene Pickett who took it in turn to the heads of the Joint Theological schools, who were very interested, but wanted more information. Our inquiries were about the curriculum, the staff, enrollment (how are women being treated?), structure. This should not be an adversarial situation, --trust must be built.

TASK FORCE ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY. Had a paper with proposal to present. Corinne, Marinel wrote a statement for the committee. Marinel presented it at the appropriate time.

Is Social Responsibility the best place for us? It is clear that we do need a staff person? Are we adequately financed in this slot?

It was further proposed that we suggest the Sexism Audit to the Social Responsibility Section.

INVOLVEMENT OF MEN ON THIS COMMITTEE. Jane Bramadat read her paper on this subject. Discussion of the pro's and con's led us to the conclusion that we would not recommend this move to the Committee on Committees this year. The two ultimate questions were, - - are there skills that are necessary to this committee that only men can offer? And, if we don't involve men, what will be the future of this program?

This idea should be taken to the Gathering.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS. The sharing of resources, successes, ways that-have-worked. UUWF is organizing. We will send our contributions to them.

Troublesome Terms, - - our "glossary" of words that give constant trouble. Maureen Killoran, minister from Toronto, Canada, who was summer minister for First Church in Cleveland, has offered help on this subject. We have added some words. A report in October.

Betty Sprague, Clerk

EXCERPTS FROM WOMEN IN RELIGION: My Personal Response

Gloria Bertonis-Ward,

Levittown, PA

For the past fifty years I have lived in a society that has steadfastly refused to recognize the potential of half of its members, the women. Relatively few women in this country have been able to rise above this cultural bias and realize their full potential as human beings with intellects, talents, skills and strengths.

In pondering the reasons for this large scale oppression of women, I have concluded that it is based primarily on the Judeo-Christian theology that insidiously pervades western civilization and gives divine sanction to male dominance and belief in the inferiority and subjugation of the female of the species. One of our culture's greatest shams - the legend of Adam and fallen Eve - has made female sexuality and power unacceptable to the western mind. The physical, emotional and psychological damage perpetrated by this myth has crippled women just as surely as the binding of the female infant's feet did in ancient Chinese culture. It corrodes any attempt at egalitarian relationships between the sexes, justifies keeping women in biological bondage and sabotages women's attempts to liberate themselves by creating deep-rooted conflicts between their belief systems and their cognition.

These belief systems, based on the Judeo-Christian religion and Freudian psychology, teach that the human being is somehow lacking or less than whole. By emphasis on the maleness of the Deity, such belief systems are especially denigrating to women. An inference can easily be made that women should be subject to the mastery of men through such a patriarchal, male-oriented view. By legislating male dominance and implying the superiority of typical male values, which include aggression, competition, authoritarianism and power, such belief systems downgrade the supposedly female qualities of gentleness, cooperation, love and compassion. This leads to sado-masochistic relationships between the sexes when the male is regarded as the supreme authority by virtue of divine ordinance. These relationships are demeaning to both males and females and prevents them from realizing their full potential both in the work place and in daily life.



Females, however, carry additional burdens. Because we have been made to feel guilty for being female and thereby introducing suffering and sin into the world, we have not been able to realize our full potential for health and fitness. Lack of respect for the female body, except as a vehicle for sexual satisfaction of males, induces depression, anxiety, guilt, jealousy, anger and various other negative emotional states which induce negative bodily states, depress the immunological system and lead to a general physical deterioration.

The so-called women's magazines contribute to the physical debilitation of women by constantly reinforcing the skeletal frame of the high-fashion model and encouraging women to diet to achieve this culturally acceptable slender body-image. The consequent frailty and lowered energy-level of women perpetuates their enslavement and prevents them from realizing their potential in the business world. Until physical fitness becomes a legitimate goal for women, we will not have the health, creativity or energy necessary to "make it" in a male world.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### CHANNING'S SISTERS AND BROTHERS

(Begun several years ago at the suggestion of Lucile Schuck Longview, this column is intended to be a means of sharing both information and activities of Women & Religion women all over the country. In this way we can each discover that we are not alone, that there are other UUs all over the continent who are working with us even though great distances separate our work.)

From Grace H. Simons in Los Alamos, New Mexico, came news of a women's group forming in her church, and a request for 6 or 8 back issues of our journal to show the group. (We gladly sent them!) Grace also suggested to us that we try soliciting articles on a particular theme for REACHING SIDEWAYS. We're ready to try! (Please see front page of this issue.)

From the Women's Issues Task Force of Cedar Lane Unitarian Church in Bethesda, Md. came information about a one day conference in Oct. entitled CHANGING THE GENDER AGENDA. The keynote speaker, Raphaela Best, author of WE'VE ALL GOT SCARS, (Indiana University Press, 1983), has researched how children socialize one another into acceptance of gender roles.

A letter from Shirley Josephson of Hatboro, PA told us of two rap sessions she attended in June at which the possibility of abolishing the W and R Committee was discussed. Because Shirley had written a letter (published) on the importance of keeping the 1977 Women & Women resolution, she was invited both to a rap session at the UUWF Biennial and at the General Assembly. Shirley reports as follows: "Both groups decided to speak out favoring the continued existence of both groups as separate entities with distinctly different functions and areas of concern, the UUWF addressing women's issues from a political perspective in the larger community and Women & Religion conducting an ongoing examination of patriarchal attitudes and assumptions within the denomination."

From the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Chapter of the UUWF of the University Unitarian Church in Seattle, Wash. came a NEARLY THERE NEWSLETTER which included a new page entitled RE: SOURCES. This new sheet is the brainstorm of Marjorie Smith, chair of the UUC's Sex Equity Women & Religion Committee, who has been dreaming about such a page for a millennium as a way to promote the Women and Religion Resource Center in the church. Lack of space prevents us from reprinting the entire sheet here, but we can't resist bringing a few of the RE: SOURCES to our readers' attention.

RE-MARKS: "I point and I point, and all they do is describe my  
finger." Maria Montessori

RE-MEMBER: "THE HOME IS A HUMAN INSTITUTION. ALL HUMAN INSTITU-  
TIONS ARE OPEN TO IMPROVEMENT." Charlotte Perkins  
Gilman

RELENTLESS: ". . . To value womens' work while trying to change  
womens' lives; to portray the poignancy and wealth  
of family love while insisting on women's right to  
self-absorbing, demanding projects; to write and  
work for oneself while refusing to turn a deaf  
ear and blind eye to traditions of womanly service ."  
Tillie Olsen

RE-COGNIZE: You know how people talk nowadays about women faking  
orgasms. Sometimes, when I hear women ingratiatingly  
thank their Mr. Reverend Minister for how he preached  
to be more giving, forgiving and serving . . . I can't  
help but think they're faking it. The HES should  
give more unselfishly, maybe, and the SHES might try  
making a virtue out of self-fullness.

RE-LIVE: "I GO FOR ANYTHING THAT WILL IMPROVE THE PAST."  
Susan Brownell Anthony

EDITORIAL COMMENT: A THANK YOU TO OUR READERS AND WRITERS

This edition of REACHING SIDEWAYS marks the completion of the fourth year of publication for our journal of opinion on Women and Religion. In this, our 13th issue, let us take occasion to thank our readers all over the continent who have encouraged our survival by their contributions of writing and money. We couldn't have come this far without you!

Occasionally we are asked by those not involved in the issues of Women & Religion why REACHING SIDEWAYS appealed to so many for so long. We get the messages you send! We have learned from letters accompanying checks from contributors that our journal fills a need for candid communication among members of this denomination who are not entirely satisfied with the progress being made on the '77, '79 and '80 Women and Religion Resolutions passed by the General Assemblies of those years. We have learned that we are providing a voice for those UU women and men who wish to make serious and reflective comments on the ways and means of ending stereotypical characterizations of women and men in our denomination. We have learned that we provide an opportunity for feminists of both sexes to network with the thoughts and actions of those all over the continent of similar convictions.

As we reviewed the past issues of our journal, we became aware of the wide spectrum of women's concerns expressed by the authors. Through much of this writing is the sound of protest, of honest and sincere people, devoted UUs, loyally opposing, within the system, those aspects of church, denomination and society, which injure women, and proposing new, positive ways of thought and action to include women as equal human beings.

We can and will continue our efforts with your help. In the insert in this issue you will find a brief questionnaire which we hope you will take the time to answer. We want to know even more about what is happening in our societies.

You will find a date on the mailing label with your name. This date tells you when you last made a contribution toward the expenses of this journal. If there is no date, you will know that you have not made a contribution, but that we are sending you the journal because we have reason to believe that you are concerned and involved with women's issues in our denomination. We hope you can contribute to our publication on a yearly basis. It is you, our readers, who will make the ultimate decision of whether or not REACHING SIDEWAYS is of value to the spiritual life of our denomination.

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