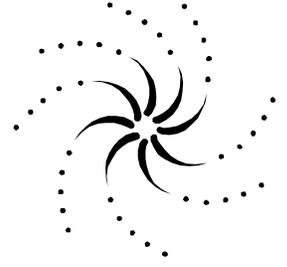


SWWIRL

SouthWest Women In Religion Letter

A quarterly publication of SWUUV – SouthWest Unitarian Universalist Women



Questionnaire Results (So far...)

It will be several months before we have a clearer picture of how we SWUUV women have organized ourselves and what we are doing and thinking. Even now, however, with the responses so far, we show our diversity – no surprise!

We range in age from 11 to 85, and our groups range from 5 months old to many decades. We are organized around everything from books and sewing to consciousness-raising and goddess ritual. Some groups provide their churches with regular services, such as worship, care-giving, and refreshments; others concentrate on their own activities. Some have community outreach; others do not. Some camp, plan field trips, and attend conferences; others stay close to home. We all value informal socializing.

One group has created a labyrinth. Another has addressed problems of confidentiality. Another is providing outreach to younger women. One group has asked for ideas for programming. We could be more helpful to one another by better networking, which is one of the hopes of our questionnaire.

So far, we have received fewer than 20 responses. Not bad for a mailing in late spring, when most of us tend to be very busy. But we're hoping for a far greater response in order to

- gain a fuller sense of ourselves,
- provide greater opportunities for helpful networking,
- establish a better data base for effective general communication,
- facilitate quick, powerful communication if necessary,
- develop a keener sense of our history.

The following groups have returned a questionnaire. Thank you! IF YOUR GROUP IS NOT ON THIS LIST, ask around to see who received the questionnaire, or ask for another (treejwg @ hotmail.com or Jackie Gibbons, 2015 Houston Place, Denton TX 76201). We want to include your group's wisdom and requests.

1. UU Village Church (Hot Springs Village, AR) – The Ovarians
2. Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge (LA) – Woman's Book Club
3. UU Church of Lawton (OK) – Sewing Circle
4. Church of the Restoration (Tulsa, OK) – considering starting a group
5. Hope Unitarian Church (Tulsa, OK) – Women of Hope
6. Spindletop Unitarian Church (Beaumont, TX) – no group
7. All Souls UU Church (Brownsville, TX) – no formal group
8. Denton UUF (TX) – Women's Group
9. Westside UU (Fort Worth, TX) – Women's Expressions Group
10. Emerson Unitarian (Houston, TX) – Women's Alliance
11. UU Church of the Hill Country (Kerrville, TX) – Women's UU Fun Alliance
12. UUF of Dallas (Oak Cliff/Dallas, TX) - UUWF
13. Community UU Church (San Antonio, TX) CUUCSA – Women's Support Group
14. Red River UUF (Sherman, TX) – no group – have attended Plano Women's Alliance

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Letter from the President

The main thrust for your officers this spring has been to get the questionnaire out. The main purpose of the questionnaire is for us to find out how we can go beyond being the sponsors of the annual conference, insuring that we are well fed at SWUSSI with Lunches Plus and collecting for the Clara Barton Camp. We know that we want and need to establish closer relationships between the women of this district. We hope that through your responses we will be helped to find ways to do this.

One of my goals as president is to have one or more contacts for SWUW in each church and fellowship. This will enable your board to get information to you quickly, to poll your group as to an issue that might arise and to in general increase our feelings of sisterhood. The questionnaire will identify the contact for your group.

We have had a low return of the questionnaires that went out in May. We knew the timing was poor as many groups shut down for the summer. In August, we will start contacting all groups who haven't responded in hopes of getting questionnaires back from ALL churches and fellowships by the end of September so that the BIG compilation of responses can be included in the Fall issue.

If you can't identify who got the questionnaire for your group, please contact me. I will be glad to let you know who it was sent to. If the questionnaire sent to your group has been misplaced, we have extra copies ready to replace it.

If you will be at SouthWest UU Summer Institute (SWUUSI), please plan to come to the SWUW meeting. It will be on Wednesday immediately following lunch (that should be about 12:45) in the Multipurpose Building. It is not necessary to eat with us in order to attend the meeting. The main topic will be whether we should adopt a social service/social action/ecological project and if we agree that we should, what are possible ideas for one or more. This report will be presented to the Annual meeting to be held at the 2002 Conference in Fort Worth.

We will also be electing the Nominating Committee at the SWUUSI meeting. Let me know if you are interesting in serving in this most important capacity. You do not have to be at present to be elected.

Something that many of us are concerned about is how do we keep our daughters interested in UUism. One way that we are trying to work on this is to sponsor a Maiden group at our conferences. For the past several years, girls have been encouraged to come to our conference with their mothers. In 2002, we will again be having some special programs for them. To fully participate in 2002, a maiden needs to be mature enough to be on her own - with other girls of course - in a city hotel. They will not necessarily be directly supervised at all times. Do consider this as a possible experience for your daughter.

I hope to see many of you at SWUUSI!

Gino Kennedy

***Gather The Spirit,
Weaving Our Lives***

SWUW Annual Women's Conference

February 22-24, 2002

Fort Worth, Texas

<http://sites.netscape.net/swuw/2002.htm>

SWUW Women Remembered -- with Loving Thanks

Margaret Perritt

Margaret Floyd Perritt was a quietly courageous woman who passed away recently at the age of 82. She grew up in Little Rock, the daughter of a school superintendent who worked with the Arkansas Department of Education. As a child, she often accompanied her father on his travels to schools across the state and perhaps for that reason, was very interested in all children getting a good education. She became a speech pathologist and worked for school districts in several states in the south, often traveling from school to school. She and her husband, who served as the only white professor in a black college for several years, were deeply involved in the civil rights movement. Recently, Margaret was a board member of the Webb Center, a black community center in Hot Springs, and organized a community group to deal with the results of welfare reform, eventually serving as the first president of the county TEA Coalition. She quietly challenged those who made bigoted remarks, whether they referred to race, sexual preference, religion or any other prejudice.

Though she had grown up in a protestant church, Margaret had been a UU for a number of years and was a member of the UU Church in Tyler, TX when she lived there. After her husband died, she moved from Tyler to Hot Springs Village, Arkansas. She joined the church in Hot Springs, and started a mid-week discussion group for UUs in the Village. She served as President of the Hot Springs church before it moved and was renamed the UU Village Church. Margaret was a committed member of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), and served as both branch and state president. Though she was ill with ovarian cancer for the last three years of her life, she fought to retain her involvement with church, a writers group to which she belonged and AAUW. Only a few weeks before her death, she attended the AAUW state convention. A lover of human rights, a fervent believer in education and equality and a student of the natural world, Margaret Perritt was a role model both in her life and in her death.

I attended a lovely memorial service for Margeret Perritt at the UU Church in Little Rock , and it was

obvious that she had deeply touched many, many lives.

Meg Koziar
UU Village Church
Hot Springs Village, AR

• • •
Anita Louise

*There is a hole in the fabric of the universe
And it bleeds drop by drop upon my heart.
It is where she fit so neatly, so perfectly,
And is now gone missing.*

*Merry we have met
and shared... and danced... and sang.
Merry we have chanted long into the night
Dancing spirals to the high heavens
And to the Earth below.
Merry we have met...*

*Merry we part
Watching her spirit fly out into the four directions,
Watching her spirit say it's last goodbye,
Watching her spirit pass at last
Into the outstretched arms of the goddess
We remember her with love.
Merry we part...*

*Merry we shall meet again
Whenever the circle is cast, the directions called,
Whenever our hearts and minds return to her memory,
Whenever her energy continues its ripple through our
lives,
Whenever our wandering eyes fall briefly upon that
spot,
That hole, twinkling like a star in the dark fabric of the
universe.
Merry we shall meet again...*

Betty Becquart Sanders
April 4th, 2001

How Another Women's District Spends Its Money

As we in the Southwest District look at how we might spend our monies, we can look at the Central Midwest District, not necessarily as a model but just for some perspective. In addition to their expenses of administration, newsletter, and conferences, they offer 4 grants @ \$125 for their spring conference and 5 @ \$85 for their fall conference. Their gifts and donations include \$200 each to the Illinois Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), Clara Barton Camp Scholarship Fund, a feminist theology award and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). Their newsletter includes a report on the RCRC activities as well as on pertinent state and federal legislation.

The Clara Barton Camp

The Clara Barton Camp has been the recipient of our modest fund-raiser of orange juice sales at SWUUSI for a number of years. We have been proud not only to serve a healthful drink at our summer camp but also to support a worthy organization.

This camp for diabetic girls began in 1932 with only 10 campers, and now sustains programs which serve over 1000 each year. The camp is located in North Oxford, Massachusetts, on over 200 acres with a lake and log cabins. It provides a variety of sports and other activities in a fun-filled atmosphere for girls 6 to 16.

Within this setting the girls are encouraged to develop personal responsibility for managing diabetes at their own pace. The camper/staff ratio is 1:3, including a medical team; most counselors and CIT's are themselves diabetic.

The organization also provides weekend and summer programs in three cities and three two-week backpacking sessions in the Adirondacks. Alumnae programs also exist.

Some of the women in our district have expressed an interest in continuing support for the camp. Their reasons include the traditional tie to the camp, the strong mission to girls, the success of the camp, and the heritage of Clara Barton, one of the most noted Unitarian women. Support for the camp comes from UU women in other parts of the country, such as the

Central Midwest District of the UU Women's Federation, who recently approved a \$200 line item for scholarships to the camp.

Arguments for discontinuing support of the camp include the location of the camp outside our district and the fact that the camp is no longer officially connected to our denomination.

Further information is available at:

www.bartoncenter.org.

When Personal Growth and Social/Eco Action Intersect

The connection between our world view/cosmology/theo(a)logy and the ever-present calls for social/eco action is unique to each of us, and we can see these differences, sometimes poignantly, in our women's groups. Some prefer to keep certain issues private or separate, while others seek lively reflection and/or action.

A possible source of good discussion is China Galland's *Longing for Darkness: Tara and the Black Madonna*. Alienated from her Catholic background, Galland begins her search in India and Nepal, experiencing power in the goddesses Kali and Tara. On the strength of her dreams and the advice of the Dalai Lama, she expands her search to various Marian shrines in Europe and America.

She is led at last to a deeper understanding of the connection between community and personal wholeness, particularly through exposure to the migrant workers and refugees from El Salvador. She is especially moved by the Mothers of the Disappeared, whose children have been abducted, tortured and murdered.

At the end of her long journey, Galland finds that "everything I had not understood began to fit. There's a point at which the spiritual and the political intersect."

As we come together in our groups, we find ourselves almost everywhere on the spiritual and political spectrums. How are we responding? Our group in Denton, for example, concentrated on personal exploration for over a decade, and now we are very slowly moving to include community outreach. How are other groups coming to terms with these choices?

WANTED... CONTRIBUTIONS TO SWWIRL

Please send reports on local activities, poems, art, short essays, book reviews, etc. to treejwg@hotmail.com or Jackie Gibbons, 2015 Houston Place, Denton TX 76201. In the fall issue, we are especially, but not exclusively, interested in exploring the relationship between personal wholeness and social/eco action. The deadline will be in October. Thanks.

Dancer in NYC!

by Erin J. Dunn

New York is the perfect place to go to if you want to dance. But New York City is also home to many big name corporations and is more of a money city. Even though it is the City of Golden Opportunities where your fame lies just around the corner. Or so they say.

I had a great time at the Joffrey Ballet School, but I don't think I'll ever go back to New York. One reason: it is so noisy and busy and no one is ever happy. People are too busy with their own reputation and money that they never take the time to smell the roses or slow down to actually live life to its full extent.

Being at the Joffrey gave this small town hick girl a sense of what she wanted to aspire to be when she grows up: a professional dancer--her only love and desire.

Their classes were hard and challenging. They put me in Beginner Classes but they were the hardest classes I think I have ever danced. I always came out covered in inches of sweat dripping from my head all the way down to my toes.

The Joffrey itself was a very interesting building to be in. The five studio's were on two separate floors. The first two were on the third floor and the other three were on the fourth floor. Each day I would climb three flights of steep stairs and I would be out of breath by the time I got to the second floor. I then arrived at the Joffrey on the third floor. I was already sweaty from climbing the stairs. The building being old didn't have air conditioning, like most places in New York. I will miss not being there since my mom's legs swelled up from all the walking we had to do.

My mom's legs did not get better when I tried helplessly to help her. I had shin splints myself for the first week we were there. They sort of got better. I made the decision after being there a week and a half that we needed to come home. Mom's legs weren't getting better and neither were my shins. I made the decision to come home. The decision that was hard but that may have saved my mom's life.

I fell in love with the Joffrey and I miss the Joffrey dearly, but I got a lot out of it. I will never forget what my teachers told me. I will treasure this summer like it was gold. I also learned an important life lesson: things don't always turn out the way you want them to. Life's lessons are never done till you are done exploring the world for yourself. Never give up. Never lose hope. Sometimes, good comes out of bad, so hold your chin up towards the sky and say, "Bring it on"!

Dancing Feet in New York

by Connie Dunn

Your feet just naturally dance to a New York beat when you get to the city of the Big Apple. New York is scary and exciting at the same time. And, it smells like no other place on earth: the mixture of yesterday's trash and the rich smells of a variety of cooked foods.

While you know you are in a big city, there are parts that feel more like a small town with lots of traffic. Greenwich Village is like that. There are babies in strollers and people on cell phones, but there is an air of familiarity. The same people are on the street everyday. Even the guy who lives in a phone stall at 10th and Sixth Avenue was a known commodity.

On our first day in New York, we arrived by taxi at the address of the Joffrey only to find a Bagel shop. I somehow knew that it was the right place. Of course, by looking up, my feeling was confirmed. There on a third floor window as big as life was written: JOFFREY BALLET SCHOOL. The building was old, and we were more than an hour early.

The smell of sweat, wood and dirty feet made the studio feel about as homey as did the mismatched benches that lined the walls of the small waiting room. Soon, the room was filled with the bustle of dancers getting on shoes and finding their classes. And when the flurry died down, moms seemed to sigh in unison as they leaned against the walls. Daughters and sons now delivered to classes, it was time for the adults to do...what?

We were all at loose ends in New York City. For the most part, the moms that I talked with had never been in New York and were from all over the country. I did meet several moms from Texas. None of us were comfortable about leaving our daughters that first day. As time wore on, leaving them for the duration of the class got easier, but there was little to do within walking distance.

And just what was walking distance in New York? Ah! How far can you walk? The first days, I explored Greenwich Village some. It was mostly a residential area with shops and restaurants. I walked 10 blocks up Avenue of the Americas one day only to realize that I would have to walk back those same 10 blocks.

(Continued on page 6)

(Dancing Feet, continued from page 5)

From our apartment in Battery Park City, which looked out at the back of the World Financial Center and was only two blocks from the World Trade Center, we could take a bus to within six blocks of the Joffrey. Walking was such a fact of life in New York that it would soon cause me such problems that Erin would decide to cut short her studies at the Joffrey Ballet School to bring me home.

Before my feet and legs became such a medical issue, we managed to see a Broadway show (*Phantom of the Opera*), walk around the Metropolitan Museum of Art, attend the Manhattan UU Church, eat the best hot dogs from a street vendor, walk through a part of Central Park and become very familiar with buses in New York City. We had planned other exciting adventures, such as going to the Statue of Liberty, which could be seen across the Hudson River where our apartment sat. We could not see it from our apartment, but it was easily visible after walking four blocks to a park.

Erin's legs were also bothering her and affecting her performance in class. If she walked too much, she got shin splints. So we were trying to be conservative about walking. My ankle was swelling. But every morning it seemed to have gone down until about Tuesday of the second week. That's when it became obvious that I might be dealing with something else.

I had been propping up my legs most evenings, but Tuesday night I got up and did something to my heel and couldn't put my weight on my foot. This was going to be a problem. I just prayed that it would be better the next day. It was. But my other leg was swollen to about three times its normal size. Erin was adamant that we should come home.

On Wednesday of the second week, we came home. I was feeling very bad that I had caused Erin to miss studying longer at the Joffrey, but I was also in a lot of pain. I went to the doctor the next day and received a prompt diagnosis and treatment plan. I sat with my feet up for about four days and a lot of the swelling went away. In fact, my ankles haven't been this skinny in years.

Bottom line is that I'm still not sure what is causing the swelling, and if I'm up on my feet, they swell and they hurt all the way up my legs. So, I feel sad about the Joffrey training but very proud that Erin was mature enough to make the decision to protect my health over her enjoyment of the Joffrey.

Did she get enough out of the Joffrey? The question is: how much is enough? She got an experience that she'll never forget. She also learned that she really doesn't like New York very much. It's just too big and she's still a small town girl.

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