



SWUWWorld

*Women Helping Women
Lighting the Way to Possibilities*

Newsletter of Southwest UU Women

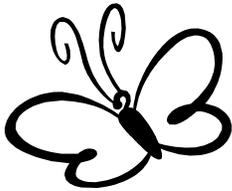
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Volume 2005 Summer Issue

THE NEW SWUWCON

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world: indeed it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead



The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of the dream.

Eleanor Roosevelt

The annual SWUW conference is our biggest ongoing project. It is important for many reasons not the least is that it is the one time when we collect ourselves into one place to communicate face to face. It is also one of the venues with which we achieve our stated goals of education and spiritual development.

The requirements for SWUWcon are simple enough: a facility which has a central meeting room large enough to hold 250-300 people, breakout spaces in which to hold workshops, workshop leaders, four meals and bedrooms. Oh, and a theme and a speaker. Not so simple after all. Planning and executing a conference takes at least a year. A facility which provides the amenities listed above should be reserved two years ahead, and it is not unusual to book a speaker three years out.

Traditionally, the decision on where to hold the conference has been a haphazard and sometimes frantic volunteer effort on the part of an existing women's group or even just a few SWUW members who wanted to host it. That format is becoming increasingly unworkable largely because of the increased expense and complicated contractual responsibilities required. Also, now that we are officially a UUA affiliate and a 501(c)(3) organization, we have to "dot all of the i's and cross all of the t's."

The SWUWboard proposes this: that the site for the conference rotate through a set series of venues. Since the largest number of our members are in Texas, and we have the largest attendance when we meet in the areas of Houston, Dallas/ Ft. Worth, and Austin/ San Antonio, we would alternate a Texas conference with an Oklahoma/Missouri, Arkansas/ Tennessee or Louisiana conference.

The facility contract, event insurance, theme speaker contract, merchandise production and registration would be handled by SWUW central. The host committee would develop the workshops, the opening and closing ceremonies, the late night ritual and the volunteer base necessary for the running of the event. The SWUWboard and the host committee would work together to decide on the theme and the theme speaker.

In order to make this happen we will still need that core group of dedicated worker women. We envision this group to be regionally connected rather than a single church community. This model has already

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FROM THE PRESIDENT**SWUJW@GA & SWUJW@SWUJSI**

We have a lot going on this summer! At General Assembly in June, we will have a booth in the exposition hall where we will be selling raffle tickets for our superb bra quilt. If you are attending GA, please give us a couple of hours and help us woman the booth. Or just stop by to say, "Hi," and buy a raffle ticket!

Also, we are sponsoring two workshops. Rev. Barbara Coeyman's will be "Wonderful Women in Our Southwest UU Heritage" at 9:45-11:00 on Friday and Saturday. Elizabeth Muller will be leading the second one, The Dances of Universal Peace, Saturday, 3:45 to 5:00, which will offer a selection of the Dances which honor women and engender peace from a feminine perspective. We will use these slots in the GA week to inform the greater UU community about our organization its activities.

At SWUJSI, we are again presenting Lunches Plus. The plus this year will be videos that will be shown during lunch. We can always use help in the prep and in the cleanup. We play while we work and have a good time!

The SWUJW meeting which we usually have after lunch on Wednesday (when no one can attend because of workshop commitments) will be DIFFERENT THIS YEAR. We will have an evening meeting/party after the sunset talk on Thursday in the cabin across the street from the Multipurpose Building where Lunches Plus are served. The cabin number will be announced in the daily newsletter and at Lunches Plus. There will be liquid refreshment and munchies as well as chat and planning.

Even though we are spread out all over the SW district, we are one organization. You are a part of this. There are big jobs, and there are small jobs. Don't be afraid to volunteer. It's a great way to get to know your sisters better. Shared experiences are what bonding is all about!

Your prez,
 Elizabeth Muller

BRA QUILT COMPLETED & WILL BE RAFFLED AS A SWUJW FUNDRAISER

The Bra Quilt that was started during the workshop at our February conference in Houston is now finished and will be on display at GA in Fort Worth this month. The quilt will be raffled as a SWUJW fundraiser. Many people worked on this great quilt and we want to be sure we credit everyone who had a hand in this. If you came to the workshop and started a block, please email Mary Kirwin with your name, address, and phone number. And mention which block is yours if you remember your fabrics.

SWUJW will be selling raffle tickets (\$1.00 each, or six for \$5.00) at GA. And, if you won't be at GA, you can still get in on the drawing by sending us your contact information and your check by June 22nd and we will enter your tickets in the drawing. The raffle will take place on Sunday, June 26 at 3:00 PM. Send your checks to SWUJW Administrator Laura Nagel at 5202 Crawford, Unit 19, Houston, TX 77004.

Visit our website to learn about other SWUJW activities at General Assembly.

- - - Mary Kirwin

LESBIAN GAY RIGHTS LOBBY LOBBY DAY 2005

And service is our prayer - The first time I visited a Unitarian Universalist church and heard those words, they resonated in my soul. For me service is the expression of my beliefs and moral convictions. While there are many areas of concern to draw our attention, the reality is that we only have just so much energy to go around. Each of must chose where to focus our energy.

Twelve years ago I was one of a group of parents who formed the Fort Worth Chapter of PFLAG, Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians & Gays. It soon became a central part of my life. Support, education and advocacy are the core mission of PFLAG. Support and education I grasped right away. Advocacy was something I could aspire to, and somehow I grew into it. Participating in the Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby (LGRL) organized Lobby Day at the state capital with like minded folks from across the state is advocacy in action.

The march on the Texas State Capitol on Sunday March 20 was a colorful and dynamic event. Watching the marchers come up Congress Avenue toward the Capitol was an awesome sight. The speakers at the Rally that followed were inspiring, putting us all in the right frame of mind to meet the challenges of Lobby Day on Monday.

On Monday morning we gathered at 8:30 in the Capitol Annex to prepare to meet our legislators. We spent an hour assembling teams of 5-6 people, reading the information packets and role playing a lobbying encounter for practice. Two other training sessions were held for the convenience of participants, one on Sunday evening and the other at 10:30 a.m. on Lobby Day. The team I joined included a gay man who is a counselor and a member of the LGRL board, a lesbian couple and two of their five children, both young teens, a gay man and his pre-school son, and myself, PFLAG mom.

Each team was assigned a list of 6-7 legislators to visit, all on the same hall, for the most efficient use of our time. LGRL targeted three issues to concentrate on: House Joint Resolutions (HJR) 19 and 6, The Anti-Gay Marriage Amendment, House Bill (HB) 143, The Employment Non-Discrimination Act and the companion bill, HB 1526, The State Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and Senate Bill (SB) 201, The Dignity for All Students Act. We were given a fact sheet on each of the bills and a fact sheet on each legislator, which indicated

past and present positions on the issue.

Our team met with all 7 of our assigned legislators during the rest of the morning. Then we returned to the training room to report on our visits and write thank you notes to each person we had visited with. All the people we met with were staff persons as the legislators were on the floor for the day's legislative session. Our first and last visits were both met with a positive attitude. We were listened to politely by all the staffers, and only one wanted to debate the issues. We all told our stories and why these issues are a personal concern as well as a community concern. Following the team visits, I made brief visits to my own representative and senator offices to let them know one of their constituents was there.

My message on the gay marriage issue was that I have two children, one gay and one straight, and they do not have the same rights. I want the same rights for both. On the employment bills I supported the other team members' presentations. On the Dignity for All Students Act I talked about PFLAG's initiative, From Our House to the School House, PFLAG's goal to make school's safer for all students, about how frequently gblt students are targets of harassment, and the effect it has on their education and their lives.

Every senator and representative received a visit from one of our teams! We also helped increase support for the Dignity for All Students bill, which has been introduced in previous sessions, to a new and higher level.

The legislative session has just ended. I am very disappointed that the anti-gay marriage amendment passed but not surprised. The LGRL network of advocates kept up the pressure to the end, but not enough legislators saw it as a risk worth taking to vote against it. The other bills remained in committee to the end of the session, lost in the contentious battles over school finance and other issues. We can count one victory, however. Representative Talton, author of the anti-gay marriage amendment, not content with passage of that amendment in both houses, added an amendment to the Child Protective Services bill which would have required that gays and lesbians be eliminated from the pool of foster parents. Senator Jane Nelson, author of the bill, spoke out against the amendment as detrimental to the welfare of the

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STRATEGIC LONG-RANG PLAN, 2005-2010

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION

MAY, 2005

Because SWUW has been successful in achieving many of the milestones it set for itself over the past several years and has experienced considerable change, the board felt it was time to reexamine our organizational direction and to produce a strategic plan for going forward. On April 8, 2005, the board met with consultant, Liza Ely and spent a day with her reviewing our mission and purposes, recovenanting as a board, and developing ideas for moving forward.

Following are highlights of the discussion draft of the plan developed from that process. The entire plan is posted on the web at Long-Range Strategic Plan, 2005-2010, <http://www.swuuw.com/html/Plan.doc>. The board has already reviewed the plan and is proposing it to the membership for discussion at the SWUUSI business meeting and a final vote at our next annual conference in February, 2006 in Fort Worth.

I. Recent Accomplishments, Changes and Trends

Many of the recent changes in SWUW's organizational structure were part of an overall effort to provide greater direction and focus to the organization. Many of the changes undertaken in SWUW's structure over the past several years were done with the express intent of giving the board greater control over the organization and input into the conference since it is our primary contact with our members .

II. SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats Opportunities

An important part of strategic planning is a SWOT analysis which assays strengths and weaknesses internal to the organization, and also examines the larger environment in terms of the threats and opportunities presented.

A. Strengths

1. SWUW membership: size and longevity
2. The SWUW Conference which will celebrate its 20th anniversary next year
3. Membership commitment and loyalty to the organization
4. Non-profit status
5. Women's groups across the Southwest District and their leaders
6. Status as a UUA independent affiliate allows SWUW to present two workshops at each General Assembly and thus to showcase our member's talents and skills to a wider national audience of UU women.

B. Weaknesses

1. Many of the 250 members only attend the SWUW conference and otherwise have no involvement in the organization
2. Financial resources--no reserves and do not yet have clearly defined areas where we can grow financially.
3. Lack of diversity in membership: few members of color or younger members
4. Network of support for leaders of women's groups in congregations throughout the district
5. Understanding of the needs and skills of our own members

C. Threats

1. An important backdrop for SWUW is the status of women both in the United States and internationally. Only a cursory examination reveals that women continue to be underpaid and overworked. They are disproportionately represented among victims of violent crimes particularly within their own families. Despite these facts, they continue to shoulder primary

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responsibility for raising and providing for their children often without assistance from the fathers of those children.

2. The largest age cohort of women in America today came out of a time in our history unparalleled in achievement for women's rights. These rights, hard fought and won, have been taken for granted and sidelined while this generation of women has been busy every since raising children and pursuing careers.
3. Women are over-worked and therefore have little time to support organizations, even those such as SWUJW that support their rights and freedoms.

D. Opportunities

1. There seems to be a growing awareness of the plight of women around the globe. The U.N. Division for the Advancement of Women is one indication of this. Across the political spectrum there is a movement to advance the political rights of women.
2. The leadership and support of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, UUWF
3. UUA organizational support
4. Sponsoring and supporting women's groups outside the UUA who are interested in pursuing spiritual paths similar to our own.
5. As a UUA Independent Affiliate we have an opportunity to present our cause to the larger venue of UU women nationally
6. We can do fundraising in the wider arena of UUA

Following is an outline of the plan. Part I concerns the five basic components of SWUJW's mission and vision, which are described below in terms of their strategic importance to SWUJW. Part II is a list of specific program goals and objectives for the coming five years.

I. Mission and Vision of SWUJW

A. Community

The SWUJW community is an important source of support and networking for our members. We also recognize that it is through cooperation and solidarity that we can be most effective agents for change. Small groups have played an important role in raising women's consciousness about their own situation and thereby have helped us to fight for women's rights and equality under the law.

B. Leadership

The strength of the organization is in its leadership and in its ability to help its members develop their leadership abilities. This component of our mission has grown in importance as it has become clear that SWUJW's social justice mission in part lies in serving its own members.

C. Social Justice

SWUJW recognizes that it is a small organization and therefore must focus its social justice work in order to have an impact. The long-range strategic plan is one means to focus the organization in this area. The Bylaws state that SWUJW will work across the globe to promote greater social justice through long term systemic change at the local, national and international level.

D. Learning

SWUJW emphasizes learning, recognizing the role of women as educators and the importance of education as a means for personal growth. It also reflects a commitment to educate our membership on social justice issues.

E. Worship

Exploring women's spirituality remains a key purpose of SWUJW. Programming at our annual conferences reflects a wide diversity of spiritual practices. Women from the Southwest District have a history of strong leadership. For example, they were instrumental in raising funds which formed the basis of the U. U. Women's Federation Margaret Fuller grant program to stimulate projects in the area of women's theology. This grant has been awarded since 1985, and is an important source of support for women studying feminist

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theology.

II. Goals and Objectives

A. Actively support social justice projects locally, nationally and internationally as follows:

1. Locally:

- √ Survey SWUUV Women to determine their needs but also their skills and talents
- √ Identify women's organizations, businesses, nonprofits, and professionals who can meet the needs of our members
- √ Develop a means to link women's needs with women's resources
- √ Such a survey would be a primary focus of SWUUV's activities over the next several years. Seek outside funding to help with the costs of creating and implementing the survey. One possible source of funding could be grant from the UUWF, which has announced a new grant to be available in the Fall of 2005. SWUUV should consider applying for grant monies to implement the survey and development of a data bank of women's resources.
- √ Funding should also be solicited to create a database that would match women's needs with women resources.

2. Nationally:

- √ Reach out at General Assembly to UU women from across the country and invite them to the annual SWUUV conference.
- √ Document SWUUV's development for other UU districts who may want to create similar women's organizations.
- √ Establish closer working connection with UUWF and other UUA national organizations

3. Internationally:

- √ Explore how SWUUV can support and participate in helping to plan a Fifth International Women's Conference, FIWC
 - **Educate SWUUV members on process for garnering U.N. approval for a Fifth International Women's Conference**
 - **At SWUUV business meeting at SWUUSI in July of 2005 seek support of SWUUV members for becoming a sponsor of the FIWC**
- √ Continue to monitor and work with FINCA on the Haiti Microcredit bank
- √ Tsunami Relief project of \$600 (recipient to be determined).

B. Support the formation and care of women's groups in UU congregations across the Southwest District

1. Develop a list of leaders of women's groups at each UU congregation in the district and maintain contact with them through a SWUUV list serve and ask them to perform leadership functions for SWUUV
2. Create and identify and maintain on website materials on how to form a woman's group and resources that can help new group leaders.

C. Develop and support women leaders in the Southwest District

1. Survey SWUUV membership to learn their needs and how we can help (see Section A-1 above)
2. Award a \$1,000 scholarship to a SWUUV member to help her work or scholarship that is in keeping with the SWUUV mission.

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3. Continue to fund leadership training for two SWUUV members per year at the Dwight Brown Leadership Experience
4. Maintain a position on the SWUUV board for a woman UU minister
5. Strengthen our working relationship with women ministers in the district. This group is already well represented among SWUUV membership. Recognize and strengthen this connection.
6. Strengthen our working relationship with Directors of Religious Education. This group is already well represented among SWUUV membership. Recognize and strengthen this connection.
7. Use the two workshop openings at General Assembly to spotlight the work of SWUUV members

D. Full-time SWUUV Program

Though it may look as though SWUUV has backed into an expansion program, we have not pursued expansion for its own sake, neither has there been any attempt to finesse this issue. Rather, we have done what is necessary to pursue sound fiduciary practices in maintaining the conference. This led to the creation of a nonprofit structure. We needed more financial structure to be able to sponsor the conference. In fact an assessment by the board and conference conveners indicated that we could not continue to sponsor conferences without a more elaborate organizational structure.

The more elaborate structure in turn has required SWUUV to acquire part-time staff. In order to pay for staff we need to plan to grow the SWUUV program into the future. This will mean planning strategically to take advantage of SWUUV's unique experience and abilities and fitting that with the needs of the larger environment.

1. Grow and expand SWUUV programming beyond the annual conference so that SWUUV is eventually actively pursuing its mission in a full-time program. This may not be concluded by the end of this plan.
2. Expand the Administrator's hours toward the goal of half-time.
3. Grow the financial reserves. Grow the proceeds from the conference, reduce conference expenses, pursue new avenues for generating proceeds.
4. Produce promotional material for distribution at General Assembly.
5. Seek the support of the Southwest District in pursuing our mission and goals. Authorize the SWUUV President and Administrator to explore with the district board possible areas of mutual cooperation and support..
6. Maintain our status as an Independent Affiliate of the UUA.

E. SWUUV Annual Conference

1. Work with conference planners to closely synchronize the annual SWUUV Conference with larger SWUUV organizational goals and plans.
2. Include conference planners on the SWUUV board in the year directly preceding the conference they are planning.
3. Strive for greater efficiency in conference planning
 - √ Regularize the location of the conference around the district. This will reduce the amount of time to select a conference site and also create a sure schedule.
 - √ Work with recognized SWUUV leaders at congregations in these areas plenty of lead time to pull a conference together. The areas are as follows:
 - **North Texas—Dallas/Fort Worth**

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- **WACS—Waco, Austin, Corpus Christi, San Antonio**
- **Houston/Gulf Coast**
- **Oklahoma**
- **Arkansas/Louisiana/Tennessee/Missouri**

- √ Continue to develop the conference planning guide on the web
- √ Get smarter on conference matters particularly contracts for hotel, speaker and entertainment.
- √ Use the administrator position to create organizational memory and learning.
- √ Continue to improve the amount of proceeds from each conference and implement sharing of proceeds with local women's groups.

4. Reach out to women outside of our denomination and outside our district
5. Develop conference workshops that meet the needs of SWUW member as they have been identified in the survey.
6. Explore the concept of a women's retreat, in an effort to reduce the business of the conference weekend and to increase the opportunity for reflection and spirituality.
7. Explore with the UUWF the possibility of jointly sponsoring with SWUW a national women's conference. (2007 will be the 30th anniversary of the first national women's conference which was held in Houston in 1977.)

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been employed successfully in the last several conferences, and we want to expand it so that the women who are members of very small churches and fellowships can participate, too.

We have been having these conferences for 20 years now. That is quite an achievement. The women who have come together year after year to bring you these events have expended extraordinary effort. They have also developed esprit within our community, and they have had a lot of fun.

- - - Elizabeth Muller

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children of Texas. The Texas Freedom Network joined LGRL in calling on Texans to lobby against the amendment, and it was cut before the bill was passed.

Lobbying is not something that is only done during the legislative session. Legislators maintain local offices in their districts year round. It is a simple matter to make an appointment to speak to your legislator or one of his or her staff on an issue of concern. Making yourself known to them as someone who is actively concerned and a resource for information on particular issues can make a difference when proposed legislation is on those issues. This will be the next step in my personal advocacy journey.

If you are interested in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered issues, you can sign up to receive newsletters and email alerts from the Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, LGRL, at www.lgrrl.org and from the Human Rights Campaign, a national organization, at www.hrc.org. The Texas Freedom Network, at www.tfn.org, sending out daily news summaries with links to the complete articles, also includes related articles. It's a very useful source of material and information especially on education issues, which are one of TFN's primary concerns.

- - - Sharon Salih

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Connie Nolen who has mailed out the newsletter for the past 10 or more years!

Myrtle McMahan, Beverly Fogelman, Janet Martinique, Beverly Archibald, Lorraine Levine, Linda McConathy, and Penny Lewis are all due thanks for being part of the mailing team organized by Gino Kennedy, preparing the printed newsletter for mailing.

SWU UW PURPOSES

From the Bylaws modified February 2003

- To deepen the religious life of the women of the Southwest District;
- To bring the women of the Southwest District of the UUA into closer acquaintance, cooperation, and fellowship through the SWU UW annual conference, the Southwest Unitarian Universalist Summer Institute (SWU USI) and other district events;
- To promote the formation of new women's groups in the Southwest District of the UUA (the "District") churches and fellowships;
- To develop women leaders to be a strong and effective voice within the Southwest District of the UUA.
- To sponsor a district-wide Women's Conference to be held annually within the Southwest District;
- To educate SWU UW members on social issues; and
- To work across the globe to promote greater social justice through long term systemic change at the local, national and international level.

SWU UW ANNOUNCES GRANTS AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS

At the recent Board Planning Retreat held at the Dallas Oak Cliff UU Church in February, the Board voted to initiate an Annual Grant Award for members involved in special activities. Laura Nagel, Past-President, asked how could we do something for our own members while a discussion was taking place about where to apply our social action fund. "I just wish we could figure some way to help our own members with their own projects. Like with Barbara Coeyman writing a book about UU Texas women." After discussions were held, it was determined to use one half of each year's social action fund for a major project, as was done with FINCA bank, and one half to a member.

"WOW! I'm so excited," said Janet Martinique a former president. "This really puts the *Women Helping Women Lighting the Way with Possibilities* come alive."

The first annual award will be announced at the next SWU UW Annual Conference in Fort Worth next February 2006. The Board anticipates having around \$1,000 to present to the recipient.

The award winner needs to be:

- 21 years old
- Member of a Unitarian Universalist church in the Southwest Conference
- Involved in a project that requires research or start up money
- Educational Project/thesis for Master or Doctorate Degree
- Writing a book
- Starting a Social Action Project
- Other project we feel falls within the purview of SWU UW

The deadline for submitting an application is October 15th, 2005. Mail the application to:

SWU UW
C/o Southwest UU Conference
6720 Brentwood Stair Road
Ft Worth, TX 76112-3310

Don't forget to supply your full name, your church, your address, email and phone numbers. Please discuss your project in general, with some background, and why you feel you would be the best recipient for the award.

The SWU UW Board looks forward to your submission. Good Luck!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
Southwest Unitarian Universalist Women

To join mail in the form below with your check to: Patti Clark, SWUW Treasurer
710 D Bering Dr. Houston, TX 77057

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Address _____

Area Code _____ Phone # _____

Fax _____

e-mail _____

Name of Women's Group _____

Name/City of Church or Fellowship _____

Please make check payable to :
SWUW
SWUW is a 501(c)3 organization.
Your donations are tax-exempt. If you need more proof of contribution than your check, please ask us to send you a letter.



Dues	\$	10.00
Amount Contributing to Scholarship		_____
Amount Contributing to Social Justice		_____
Total	\$	_____

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