

Continental Constellation of Unitarian Universalist Women & Religion
Winter Solstice 1999

MATRIX II

Onward to the Sunrise - Rosemary Matson

Greetings from your two co-conveners – Helen Popenoe and myself – as we move into the next phase of the UU Women and Religion Movement. Helen and I are delighted to be working together. Each has our own tasks: mine is to initiate and process our application for affiliate status with the UUA and Helen's is to monitor and oversee the various activities coming out of our recent annual meeting in Murray Grove. The two principle ones are to revive the continental Women and Religion newsletter with MATRIX II and to carry forward our plans to offer Women and Religion programs for the 2000 General Assembly in Nashville, Tennessee next June.

It was exciting and energizing as each woman present at our Murray Grove meeting volunteered to work in some area of our future activities. The enthusiasm to be involved was awesome.

For me, accepting the co-convener position at this time, is almost *déjà vu*. It was June 1978 that Paul Carnes, UUA President at the time, asked Carol Brody and me to co-chair the first Continental Women and Religion Committee to assist him in implementing the 1977 Women and Religion Resolution. He appointed the Reverend Leslie Westbrook as Minister to Women and Religion to give us staff support. Carnes established the Committee as a "President's Committee", working directly with him, saying it was "too important a task to be put in with other UUA Board committees." It was a heady time.

Why am I hanging in there twenty years later? Because, although UU women have made great progress and wrought great changes in the UUA, the thrust of the Women and Religion Resolution has not been dealt with, i.e. we have yet to confront the religious myths and traditions that overlook and undervalue women. UU women have been given a larger piece of the patriarchal pie, but we have not been able to change the recipe of the pie. The challenge in the new millennium is to loosen the Gender Knot, unraveling our patriarchal legacy. Onward to the **Sunrise!**



Thirteen women gathered at Murray Grove on November 12-14, 1999 for the annual Women & Religion Continental Gathering. These women are W&R representatives from their district: conveners, liaisons and friends. Some of these women have been working for the past 20 plus years and some have only been involved for the past year. There is a core group that has been working since the sunseting of the Continental Women and Religion Committee four years ago. As a group, the women worked from a feminist model and collaboratively set up a structure for the weekend to continue to develop the organizational structure of the Continental Constellation of UU Women & Religion. They implemented action plans, re-tooled the mission statement and made commitments for the upcoming year. Some of the commitments are to revive Matrix II (the W&R continental newsletter), application for affiliate status with the UUA, programs for General Assembly 2000, maintenance of the website, and proposed the creation of a Wise Women Council. Some of the conversation revolved around transforming of society to partnership verses the dominator model and promoting right relations via use of complementarity, always keeping in mind the seventh generation. See inside for more about the weekend. The following is the re-tooled mission statement:

**The Continental Constellation of Women & Religion is a sisterhood
dedicated to liberating all humanity and the earth from effects of
historical hierarchical indoctrination by empowering everyone to use partnership ways
and by giving full value to the UU principles and purposes**

Matrix II Weaver
ilá Benavidez
Pacific Central



Unitarian Universalist
Women & Religion

Matrix II Editor s
Carol Hosmer
Central Midwest
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Are you a modern day feminist?

When I think of this question, what it means to me is stopping human oppression of earth's biosphere and, as Worldwatch Institute says, progressing toward sustainability through "a collective deepening of our sense of responsibility to the earth and to future generations."

Women all through the ages have contributed substantially to environmental sustainability with the tradition of our close ties to food production and preparation. Those of us who participate in Wheel of the Year worship services regularly acknowledge the spiritual link we have with our earth, past, present and future.

As a result of last June's UU General Assembly, we have a resolution structured with good study materials for promoting living in harmony with the rest of the natural world. The title of this resolution (called a "Study/Action Issue") is "Responsible Consumption As a Moral Imperative".

An excerpt from the study materials follows:

"Possible Study Questions"

1. How might Unitarian Universalist congregations promote the current movement for voluntary simplicity?
2. How can we harness our individual and collective purchasing power to encourage the sale of ecologically friendly and energy efficient services? Can the Unitarian Universalist commitment to equity and justice for all be achieved by carefully challenging the level of our own consumption?
3. Why does the government subsidize new suburban housing developments with road and sewer construction that destroy farmland and open spaces when inner city neighborhoods need to be rebuilt?

If this study is not going on in your congregation, seek out the education packet in your church office and "get the ball rolling"! I think it's an important effort we can contribute to; don't you? Here's a quote from UUSC's Gender Justice kit for the "Women and Environment" section: "American women, who do 73% of U.S. household shopping and make the health care decisions in 71% of all households, repeatedly tell pollsters they look for "green" products. Of 37 classed as 'strongly environmentalist', 60% are women." That's us, I bet!

By Helen Pop (aka Helen Popenoe)



Women & Religion's Continental Website

New Web-ms needed ASAP. Prefer someone familiar with W&R history, current activities and vision. Please e-mail initiator/web-ms Gloria Marvin at uuwandr@aol.com



UU Women and Religion & Women's Federation

At this writing, a committee is being formed among representatives of both the Federation and the W&R movement, to look at our past relationship and identify ways to move forward in true sisterhood. Look for periodic updates at Hera's Journey, in UUWF's Communicator and/or in your local W&R newsletter. Gloria Marvin

Continental Gathering at Murray Grove

More from Rosemary

So much went on at our gathering and I find that I want to share a few of my own thoughts with you. The fact that I arrived in Murray Grove without my luggage did not interfere with the rich experience of being with a group of wonderful women for a few days. My sisters also found truly ingenious ways of taking care of my needs until my lost luggage arrived 27 hours late.

I came home from this gathering quite excited and energized. I also came home with a list of things I've promised to do, which I really didn't need. But, then, every woman there took on responsibilities and multiple tasks to carry out in the coming year.

13 of us came from 7 different districts in the UUA. Our check-in sharing revealed a UU Women's Movement that is alive and active and ready to move into the 21st century. That, in itself, was energizing.

Elise's Decision-Making Tree process helped us facilitate a productive brainstorming. It brought us to finalizing a Mission Statement we had been struggling with over the past several years; as well as a unanimous decision that it was time to formally affiliate with the UUA. Two major accomplishments!

Our name remains "The Continental Constellation of UU Women and Religion." Our Mission Statement reads: The Continental Constellation of Women & Religion is a sisterhood dedicated to liberating all humanity and the earth from effects of historical hierarchical indoctrination by empowering everyone to use partnership ways and by giving full value to the UU principles and purposes.

I willingly led the discussion on affiliation since I have long felt that affiliation was critical to our survival as a continental umbrella to the Women and Religion Movement. As long as we remain marginalized, outside the official UUA, we will be unable to achieve either sufficient visibility or influence in the denomination. We need to move into the patriarchal pie in order to be able to introduce a new pie recipe. Our experience working within the district structures has shown us the truth of this.

In order to comply with the requirements of the UUA for affiliation, we devised an acceptable structure for our ongoing activities, and each woman present accepted assignments for the coming year.

I accepted being the co-convenor who will begin the process of applying for official affiliation and have already begun collecting the supporting material we will need to accompany our request. The other co-convenor is Helen Popenoe, from the Joseph Priestley District. Helen will monitor and assist the various activities coming out of our deliberations and there were many. Helen and I are long-time friends and will work well together.

These two major things accomplished, our group moved forward with enthusiasm reviving a newsletter to keep us connected; putting new energy and information in our website; developing W&R programming for GA 2000 and finding the slots necessary to put them on; forming a bridge-building committee to work with UUWF; making links with other UUA organizations, especially the UU Men's Network; outreach to women in all 23 districts with a cordial invitation to join us; supporting "Hera's Journey," the Spring Gathering of UU women in Florida; cooperating with the search for UU foremothers who had worked in the suffrage movement; and it goes on. The best news for both ilá and me is that the Conveners agreed to hold their November 2000 annual meeting on the West Coast. We'll all want to be involved in this event.

As I said before, although UU women have made considerable progress and wrought significant changes, the thrust of the Women and Religion Resolution has not been dealt with, as we can see in the unconscious habits, traditions, and institutional structures that work to augment male authority and suppress full female participation. Implementation of the W&R Resolution is a "work-in-progress."

Lucile Longview once said "I look forward to the exciting years ahead as we work together to create a community that replaces ranking with linking and nurtures all of us."

Together we can do it. Let us continue in our steady movement to the *Sunrise!*

Women in attendance at the November 12-14, 1999 W&R Continental gathering:
ilá Benavidez-Heater/*Pacific Central*, Carol Hosmer/*Central Midwest*, Laurie James/*Metro New York*,
Reena Kondo/*Metro New York*, Elise Kreiger/*Central Mass*, Gloria Marvin/*Florida*,
Rosemary Matson/*Pacific Central*, Janet Mielchen/*Metro New York*, Lois Morrigan/*Joseph Priestley*,
Helen Popenoe/*Joseph Priestley*, Peg Saintcross/*Central Midwest*, Barbara Schonborn/*Mass Bay*,
Lucille Swenson-Knights/*Florida*

All Unitarian Universalist women and friends who seek transformation, joy and renewal are invited to

Hera's Journey, Women's Gathering 2000

April 12-16 at the Life Enrichment Center & Family Campgrounds in Leesburg, Florida, just north of the Orlando near Lake Griffin. In a beautiful natural setting, the center offers air-conditioned rooms with two twin beds and private baths. Camp sites for tents and RVs with full hook-up are also available.

This national conference, organized by a committee of Florida Women & Religion and sponsored by Florida and Joseph Priestley's W&R, Womenspirit, UUWF, and other women's organizations around the country, is named after Hera, the pre-Hellenic goddess noted for being the patron goddess of heroes and trailblazers. Hera's Journey will serve as an allegory for exploration of what Joseph Campbell called the Hero's Journey. Envision your life as a heroine on every woman's journey. You are invited to reflect upon the beginning of your journey, explore the trials you have faced, and examine your hard won victories. We have not even to risk the adventure alone, for the heroes of all time have gone before us. We have only to follow the thread of the hero path where we had thought to travel outward, we will come to the center of our own existence. And where we had thought to be alone, we will be with all the world. The labyrinth represents because of the many turns, but only one way in and one way out. The labyrinth will serve as a tangible path. The six archetypal guides of Carol Pearson's (the innocent, orphan, wanderer, warrior, altruist, and magician) will introduce the challenges of the hero's path. The attributes of these major archetypes mark the twists and turns we experience as we walk the labyrinth, which symbolizes the quest of our life.

Facilitating and giving the keynote on archetypes will be UU Minister of Religious Education Caroline Fenderson, a graduate of Jean Houston's program on archetypes. Caroline will be addressing the group and presenting workshops on how archetypes influence our struggles and strengths as we travel on our journey.

The Reverend Dr. Lauren Artress will bring her 40-foot labyrinth and give a keynote on how this twelfth century mystical tool symbolizes the path of our lives. Dr. Artress is internationally known for bringing the labyrinth from Chartres Cathedral, France and recreating it in Grace Cathedral, San Francisco. She is the author of "Walking a Sacred Path, Rediscovering of the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool."

Join the Armstrong Sisters, singers, poets, and storytellers, as they follow the ancient ritual of walking the story of life from the call to adventure, crossing the threshold, meeting the wise ones as well as the demons, wrestling with the shadow, receiving the boon of insight and returning again.

Rebecca Armstrong has degrees in religion from the University of Chicago Divinity School and Meadville-Lombard Theological School. She is a certified Humanist Minister through the Humanist Society of New York. Jennifer Armstrong tells Celtic, Appalachian and personal stories interwoven with music and poetry.

NPR's Margot Adler, Wiccan priestess and author of "Drawing Down the Moon" and memoir "Heretic's Heart" will create "ecstatic ceremony" while leading participants in song and dance of phantasmagoric festivities.

Workshops will be offered related to archetypes, labyrinths and spirituality, the outdoor experience, and the political as personal. Workshops include but are not limited to: Breast Cancer Survival, Alternatives to Violence, Feminism & Love, Clothesline Project, Elemental Hungers of the Soul, Ritual as a Seamless Thread, Centering Home: Mythologies of the Labyrinth, Not Banished from the Garden, Befriending the Muse, Dancing in the Circle: Creativity from the Body Up, Discover Your Wanderer: The Ropes, yoga, circle dance, Natural Labyrinths, and kayaking.

Come; join us in beautiful Florida at an exciting event bridging our many diversities. Registration information can be obtained by contacting Diana Fraser, registrar, at 727-391-3446, rennfraser@aol.com, fax-727-393-0330; 9974 Lake Seminole Drive East, Largo, FL 33773 OR CLICK INTO THE SPECIAL WEB www.theverb.com/herasjourney

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