

**Women and Religion Task Force  
Annual Report  
submitted to Pacific Central District  
March 18, 1999**

The Women and Religion Task Force continues to grow at a rapid pace. There has been a significant increase in women attending the monthly meetings and the retreats. Monthly meetings are frequently attended by 40 or more women and we have had a few men will join on occasion. The yearly Women & Religion retreat has increased in the number of women attending. We have more young women taking leadership and participating in our events. In both our monthly programming and retreats there is a significant increase in the numbers of women from throughout the district who are becoming involved with Women & Religion and are finding it to be an enriching experience. Our theme for this year has been “Loosening the Gender Knot.”

In July 1999, there will be a transition of leadership, as Geri Kennedy steps forward to serve as convener for the Pacific Central District. ilá Benavidez-Heaster will continue to serve at the convener for the Continental Constellation UU of Women & Religion.

The Continental Constellation of UU Women & Religion continues through the district conveners to develop its organization. The CCUUWR continues to steadily move towards achieving affiliate status. Ilá Benavidez-Heaster, has stepped forward, as one of the conveners, to assist with the development of this group. The other convener is Gloria Marvin from Florida. At the 1998 General Assembly in Rochester, the CCUUWR offered five programs. The W&R programs were packed and many people were turned away because there wasn't sufficient seating to accommodate the numbers who wanted to attend. There will be five Women & Religion programs offered again this year at the General Assembly in Salt Lake City. A special thanks you to the Pacific Central District for sponsoring the Continental Constellation of UU Women & Religion by sharing their booth space at the General Assembly. And, a special appreciation to Beverly Smrha who assisted in the facilitating for CCUUWR to be a part of the booth. What is demonstrated by the district conveners working from their various locations throughout the continent is a high level of successful collaboration.

The UU Women's Federation held a special reception before the General Assembly began in June in honor of Lucile Longview along with our own Rosemary Matson. They received the UUWF Ministry to Women award. Both Rosemary and Lucile received individual plaques and there are duplicate copies of

the plaques hanging in the Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls.

Congratulations, to Rosemary Matson from our district. Lucile Longview was the originator and initiator for the Women & Religion Resolution. And, the women from W&R &UUWF worked in collaboration with Lucile on the final draft.

Rosemary was our first, Women & Religion leader on the continental level and it was her responsibility to implement the resolution. She was also a strong influence of the development of W&R in the Pacific Central District.

I would like to note that many of the women who have been strong influences across the continent come from the Pacific Central District. Rosemary Matson who has been mentioned above, Reverend Shirley Ranck who began with a curriculum that later became the "Cakes from the Queen of Heaven" that has been the singular most influential processes of bringing women out. To use Shirley's words "The women in eight hundred of our congregations took that curriculum and used it as a springboard to all kinds of creative ritual and worship." And, "They began to celebrate with ritual the personal milestones in their lives." The other woman is Liz Fisher with her "Rise Up and Call Her Name." When traveling in UU women circles you will hear the names of Shirley Ranck and "Cakes" along

with Liz Fisher's and "Rise Up." The PCD should be proud to have these women in with their huge magnitude of influence across the continent.

This year's 1999 retreat, "Rich River of Love," was lead by Marilyn Alexander, Marnie Collier, Joyce Fortune, Fran Perry, and Linda Seligman. These women had not led a Women & Religion retreat before and they did an exquisite job. There were close to 65 women who indicated they wanted to attend. Unfortunately, two women had to be turned away because of insufficient space, and three women had to cancel due to last minute health and personal need issues. There were 61 women attending the retreat. The retreat was rich in the diversity of its presentation that came directly from the women who were participating. The leaders did an outstanding work of art in organizing, affirming the women in so many caring ways and at the same time remained consistently sensitive to the needs of the women. The responses on the evaluations praised the work of the organizers. The retreat was indeed well done. Connections were made and understandings deepened as to the needs of our women in the district.