

**Executive Director's Report
2021 Annual Meeting
of Unitarian Universalist FaithAction New Jersey
June 12, 2021**

Board Members

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*Vice President
(Montclair)*

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(Morristown)

Liandra Pires
(Englewood)

Mark Williams
(Fanwood)

Charles Loflin
Interim Exec. Director

To Our Delegates, Supporters, Board of Trustees, Donors and Friends:

As fiscal year 2021 draws to a close, UU FaithAction NJ, like the rest of the world, continues to navigate the COVID-19 Global Pandemic. While we are fortunate that effective vaccines have been developed and that restrictions are beginning to lift as some aspects of pre-pandemic life return, it is imperative that we acknowledge the almost 600,000 lives that have been lost in the U.S. alone. Worldwide over 3.7 million people have died from COVID-19. This has been an unprecedented year of social distancing and masking, of zoom meetings and online education, and flexibility and adaptation. Even as we begin to envision a path towards in-person gatherings, we acknowledge that these are uncertain times.

Moreover, this last year also included one of the most divisive elections in American history and the unconscionable behavior of Donald Trump in an effort to undermine and overturn an election while literally promoting insurrection at the nation's capital. In the aftermath of those events, voting rights—especially those of BIPOC identities—are under attack. These continue to be troubling times.

Despite these challenges, UUFANJ has continued to work towards its vision of “a just New Jersey free from systemic oppression and greed, full of engaged people committed to each other, to our communities, and to the earth.”

The entire board under the leadership of president Mia Morse has risen to the challenge. The task forces and in particular our amazing task force chairs continue to do the work of educating, mobilizing, and advocating. UU FaithAction staff have worked hard to support and sustain the organization. Perhaps most important of all, the support of those individual UUs from the congregations across the state make it all possible with their generosity of time, talent and treasure. Thank you!

In this report, I will summarize some of the key activities and achievements that have marked this last year. I encourage you to read each of the task force reports for more detailed information.

- Legislative achievements included:
 - Passage of the Cumulative Impacts Bill which is considered to be among the strongest Environmental Justice legislation in the country
 - The Immigration Justice Task Force was instrumental in advocating for rule changes to the Drivers License Regulations that impact immigrants
- The 2020 Fall Issues Conference held via Zoom was extremely well attended.
 - There were 137 registered attendees.
 - Gun violence prevention was highlighted by keynote speakers Kelly Sampson and Jai Patel
 - Each of our five task forces identified priority goals for the year
 - The Fall Issues Conference launched FAIR, the Faith Action Inclusion Representatives led by Youth from across the state. A very special thanks to Rev. Rob Gregson for his efforts in bringing this group together and also to Liandra Pires, Carline Murphy, and Emily Parker who have been instrumental in providing continuing support for these youth
- In March, the 2021 UU Justice Gala was held virtually
 - Former Executive Director Rev. Craig Hirschberg was honored as well as environmental activist Kim Gaddy
 - More than 183 participants registered for the event
 - More than \$20,000 was raised
 - Each of the five task forces and FAIR produced a high quality video
 - A very special thanks to Elaine Nigham, Lynne Quinto, Jerry Fried, Tom Moran, and Emily Parker for their extraordinary efforts for the Gala
- The Gun Violence Prevention Task Force was reconstituted under the leadership of task force chair Liandra Pires
- The board worked with the Rev. Jake Morrill of the Tennessee Valley UU Church in Knoxville for a Strategic Visioning Retreat
- UUFANJ continues to build strong relationships with coalition partners across all of our task forces
- The board voted to approve the formation of a special Reparations Task Force (whose genesis began in the Criminal Justice Reform Task Force)
- UUFANJ continued to be active with the national Coalition of Unitarian Universalist State Action Networks (CUUSAN)
- UUFANJ continued to be active with the New Jersey Coalition of Religious Leaders (NJCRL) holding a position on that organization's leadership team
- UUFANJ presented (and received) support from major individual donors
- The Restorative Justice Network launched (which had its genesis within the Criminal Justice Reform Task Force)
- Drew University seminarian Ken Marino became UUFANJ's first ever ministerial intern. Drew University seminarian Laura Kushner will serve as ministerial intern in the coming year
- Both the Reproductive Justice Task Force and the Criminal Justice Reform Task Force were integral in efforts to expose the abuse occurring at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility For Women.

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We are proud of the work that UU FaithAction NJ accomplished this past year. We continue to believe that UU FaithAction NJ is a substantial voice not only to the UU's across the state but also to our allies and coalition partners.

The work for justice matters more than ever before and UUFANJ is committed to living into its Anti-Oppression commitments and in particular to centering Anti-Racist efforts.

Iris Marion Young, the late political theorist and feminist from the University of Chicago, in her book *Justice and the Politics of Difference* named five faces of oppression. They include: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. I genuinely believe that UUFANJ is committed and well positioned to make a real difference in opposing oppression in all its forms.

Let us be about the work.

For justice, equity, and compassion,
Charles Loflin

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