



# UUJEC News & Views: Summer 2022



| newsletter@uujec.org | Sally Jane Gellert, editor

## Upcoming Web Seminars: Join us on 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursdays!

### Thursday, June 9: GA Preparation

Going to GA this year? Live, or virtual? Either way, the UUA board is hosting a series of zoom meetings to help attendees and other interested UUs navigate GA successfully. There are 3 sessions still to come; see page 4 of this newsletter for details. Thursday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, at 8 P.M. EDT (7/6/5 going west), UUJEC will also have a preparatory session, focussing on a preview of our programming, issues that we consider important, and with time for general discussion of expectations. Join us for a preview of GA 2022!

### Public Health and COVID-19

More than one million Americans have died because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the tragedy continues. Starbucks and other workers are organizing to obtain adequate medical insurance and health and safety protection. For teachers, creating a healthy and safe environment in classrooms is essential.

At last year's General Assembly, the UUJEC was outspoken in calling for public health protection and for major reforms in the delivery of medical care services. We ask all Unitarian Universalists to support this important work.

### Thursday, July 14:

### Conversation with David Korten



On a path to self-extinction, humans face a defining choice: transition to a civilization dedicated to care for one another and the living Earth or bear the consequences. What might that future look like? How might we get there?

David Korten has guided the thinking of UUJEC over many years with his books and presentations at GA and at our annual meeting. This year he is offering his most comprehensive analysis of where we must target our efforts as we confront the existential threats of war, economic and social injustice, endangered natural resources and species, and climate disruption. Please take time to watch our on-demand program at GA\* this year, and then please join us on July 14<sup>th</sup> for an interactive conversation about "Ecological Civilization: Earth, Religion, and the Human Future." *What do you imagine for our collective future? What might be the role of the institutions of religion?*

\* Contact us if you are not attending GA—this program is open to all.

### No REACH! May 23, PNHP & others

Wall Street profiteers have their hands in Medicare, and it's going to take a national movement to kick them out. Physicians for a National Health Program—pnhp.org—is cohosting "Turning up the Heat on Direct Contracting and REACH" on May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 1:00 p.m. EDT (12/11/10 across the continent). Advocates will gather virtually to reignite the fight for Medicare for All, with seniors, physicians, community groups, and Congressional leaders. This event launches a summer of national action against these programs, which benefit private companies, not seniors. Please register today, and invite three of your friends and colleagues to join you!

**Call the Capitol switchboard at 202/224.2131.**



## UJEC Goes to GA!

**Find us with UUSJ at Booth 320—  
and we're already on Whova**

### **Our On-Demand Workshops**

#### **Faith Calls Us On: Faith, Religion, and Reparations**

For Reparation to be successful, our society must understand its necessity, because the truth of Chattel Enslavement has not been told. Political forces are now emerging to keep that truth hidden. We include information about UU collaboration projects with N'COBRA and Reparations work in Philadelphia, and Evanston, Ill., and encourage similar projects elsewhere.

#### **Ecological Civilization: Earth, Religion, and the Human Future (David Korten)**

On a path to self-extinction, humans face a defining choice. Transition to a civilization dedicated to care for one another and the living Earth, or bear the consequences. What might that future look like? What might be the role of religious institutions?

### **Our Actions of Immediate Witness**

#### **Protect the Livable Climate We Love—Climate Justice Requires Addressing Military Emissions**

The IPCC said that advancing climate change must be considered **CODE RED** for Humanity and requires urgent action to keep global temperature rise at a livable 1.5°C. The Department of Defense is the world's largest institutional contributor to greenhouse gas emissions; peace and diplomacy must outweigh the call to militarism and wars if we are to maintain a livable planet.

#### **Education: Justice Is Needed**

Schools have become battlegrounds. Censorship and bullying are common in many schools, students and teacher protection are needed, and education must be more accessible. Families are in debt because of college loans and preschool costs. Four points need immediate attention: (1) Schools should be safe and healthy places. (2) Adequate support for early childhood development is important. (3) Postsecondary education should be more accessible. (4) Teachers and other workers need support as they organize for adequate compensation, better working conditions, and union representation.

#### **Support Starbucks Workers**

This AIW expresses support for Starbucks and other workers who are organizing democratic labor unions. The UUA recently sent labor union information to congregations. The AIW asks UUs to use the Labor Day season to educate congregations and communities about the importance of democratic labor unions.

#### **Anti-Racism & Reparations via Restorative Justice**

This AIW will engage UU Congregations in conversation and workshops to claim truth and promote healing of our legacies in racism, chattel enslavement, and genocide, whose consciousness has morphed into this the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The core of this AIW is the power of Restorative Justice, needed by UUs as accountability required by our humanity and expressed by some as the proposed 8th principle. This AIW will put Unitarian Universalism in the forefront of healing our nation from its crimes.

#### **Stop the Privatization of Medicare**

The Biden administration is poised to follow the Trump administration's plan to privatize Medicare, only changing to a more positive name. We must act to prevent this attack on Original Medicare, scheduled for January 2023—just 6 months away!

## Silver Lining in COVID-19!

"Hey!"

We have a problem here and we need paid sick leave.

Yeah, right. How long have we been advocating for this? Finally, people can hear us. It just took COVID-19 to get their attention. While we're speaking, let's see if they can hear us say that we need housing for the homeless, or affordable childcare and education.

COVID-19 has exposed how vulnerable we are without such universal programs. Without paid sick leave, employees have to carry the entire burden of protecting coworkers and customers. The employer gains because coworkers and customers are protected from infections. But without paid sick leave, employees have a devil's bargain: work sick or become homeless and destitute. Now we can see that Universal Healthcare and sick leave have universal benefits—protecting even the rich who might have to pay more taxes. Taxes may go up,

Without paid sick leave, employees have a devil's bargain: work sick or become homeless and destitute.

but insurance premiums disappear, leaving a net savings for most!

COVID-19 didn't come from the unwashed masses—it came on a jet plane carrying well-to-do people. We can

also see that capitalist healthcare is a hazard to our health, leading to the evisceration of national leadership and resources for epidemics, leaving state and local jurisdictions in desperate need.

Bacterial infections are becoming more dangerous because the pharmaceutical companies are selling antibiotics by the ton for animal feed. The pharmaceutical industry makes money while destroying the antibiotics' ability to work,—bacteria develop resistance quickly to over-used antibiotics. Development of an antibiotic costs a billion dollars, and the drug industry isn't interested: selling a course of antibiotics doesn't create enough cash flow. Perhaps our government needs to take charge and develop antibiotic and antiviral medications.

Salt Lake City discovered that paying \$600 rent per month for a homeless people was a bargain compared to the cost of leaving them on the street. HUD estimates that it costs \$30,000–\$50,000/year for people to live on the streets with emergency-room visits, police time spent, and other social services. All we have to do is stop being so cruel. Humanitarian issues aside, why house them? Because their health is at stake—which means everyone's health is at risk.

| Continues on next page

## Silver Lining in COVID-19! (continued)

While we're fixing America's biggest problems, affordable (or maybe even free) education and child care are top issues. Childcare costs are comparable to college tuition—and we wonder why births have declined in the United States. There were 3.6 million babies born in 2020, the lowest number of births since 1986, when we had 240 million Americans (today we have 327 million Americans). The average cost of daycare is \$14,117 per year, per child. Add student loans and the cost of rent or to buy a house—it's hard to find jobs that pay that well.

The median cost of a home in the U.S.A. is \$269,000; in New York City it's over \$850,000, and in San Francisco it's \$1.522 million. As we were heading into COVID-19 quarantine, work requirements for SNAP (formerly called Food Stamps) were going to kick in.

On April 1, 2021, Congress passed a bill to suspend those requirements. As many as 700,000 to over a million people were expected to lose benefits—fortunately, our government got generous for a while.

We need to make sure that people always have food. Our farmers are awash with food—there's no reason to have anyone starve except intentional cruelty. As the government has become more and more stingy, our local food pantries have picked up more and more of the slack.

This is our moment to advance our values in the U.S. It may be a long time before we have such an ideal time. There's no reason, as the wealthiest country in the history of the earth, that our care of the most vulnerable needs to be so shabby.

| Terry Lowman, cochair, UUJEC

## Letters!

UUJEC gets requests from various organizations to sign on to a variety of letters. Independently-active board members also suggest sign-ons for consideration by the UUJEC. Here we list those we have signed recently:

In the last month, we supported the following:

- An immigration letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas, urging him to exercise his discretion to **grant relief to sanctuary leaders and immigrant rights activists** Edith Espinal, Hilda Ramírez, María Chavalán Sut, and Vicky Chávez. Each of these leaders and their church congregations had been surveilled by the Trump administration, and selectively targeted with exorbitant fines and threats of deportation. Though the DHS ended the policy, these women have not gotten relief.
- Faith organizations' sign-on letter opposing the **Public Health and Border Security Act of 2022**, a harmful antisylum bill that would raise to an impossible standard the threshold to rescind the public health authority known as **Title 42**. Although we know that there are concerns with quickly repealing Title 42, a majority of us agreed that the lack of a true public-health rationale for its maintenance motivated us to add our voice to those calling for repeal.
- Environment America's letter calling for an **end to cutting old-growth trees** and for protecting for the Canadian boreal forest.
- A letter anchored by the Center for Biological Diversity, Solar United Neighbors, the Energy and Policy Institute, and Institute for Local Self Reliance asking the Federal Trade Commission to **investigate utility companies' anticompetitive and anti-democratic practices** impeding renewable energy competition and harming consumer protection. The letter included detailed back-up documentation of such practices.
- A letter to **Janet Yellen** asking the Department of the Treasury to publicly call on IDB Invest to divest from **Honduras' Jilamito Hydroelectric Project** and to use its voice within IDB Invest to call for the cancellation of the bank's loan to that project. The loan was put on hold following the May 2021 decision the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to cancel its \$35.7 million loan to the project. The DFC's decision to cancel the proposed funding for this project came after an extended due diligence period in which the DFC considered the project's social and human rights situation. NGO letters about the Jilamito Project, cited in the letter, provide information on the community opposition to the Jilamito Project, the desire of many local residents to have the Jilamito River preserved for potable water for 16 communities, and the violence, threats, and spurious criminal charges faced by those who oppose the project. Those familiar with the 2016 murder of Honduran environmental activist Berta Cáceres will note a depressing similarity with the allegations about corruption leading to this project.

[Write icon created by Freepik - Flaticon](#)

## News about Health: Help Stop the Privatization of Medicare

It is urgent that you contact President Biden and your Congresspersons, asking them to prevent the implementation of the privatized ACO-REACH program, scheduled to go into effect in **January 2023**, and to stop the selling of Medicare Advantage plans.

Compared to other developed nations, our nation:

- ranks lowest in health care;
- has the lowest life expectancy and the highest infant-mortality rates;
- in 2019 spent about \$11,000 per person on health care, while other comparable nations spent an average of \$5500;
- profoundly limits access to health care to the wealthy and employees with health benefits.

Thus, it is imperative to pass Medicare for All—

- an improved public Medicare system that would provide quality health care for all U.S. residents;
- that would include dental, eye, hearing and mental health care, and would cost our nation and most individuals less than our present system;
- as has been described in bills introduced by Representative Jayapal and Senator Sanders.

There is a concerted effort to privatize Medicare, enrolling people in private insurance without their understanding or consent to what is happening—programs that are administered by contracted entities that need not be medical professionals yet can refuse needed care, give inferior care, and reap profits. This can happen despite individuals consciously and deliberately choosing the original Medicare program, which does not have these limitations.

The Trump Administration's Direct Contracting

Entity (DCE) program, which included such privatization, was cancelled by the Biden Administration.

However, they have proposed a new, very similar program, *scheduled to begin in **January 2023***. This program is called ACO-REACH (Accountable Care Organization Realizing Equity, Access, and Community Health). It would allow Wall Street private-equity firms to make decisions based on profit, not clients' health—to "manage" senior care, enrolling them in for-profit programs without their understanding or consent. These programs will often deny seniors needed care while profiting the providers, who may not have any medical experience.

Currently, there are Medicare Advantage plans, which are like Roach Motels—cockroach traps with a sticky glue-like adhesive inside to grab onto entering roaches' legs, rendering them immobile. A report about Medical Advantage plans from Health and Human Services Department's Office of the Inspector General says that tens of millions of denials issued each year for both authorization and reimbursement show evidence of "widespread and persistent problems related to inappropriate denials of service and payment"—in other words, denials of claims that should have been paid.

Have you already succumbed to the advertising aimed to get you to purchase a Medicare Advantage plan? If so, it will behoove you to read the fine print and see if you want to remain in it, and, if you don't, see if you can to get out of it.

However, whatever your current status, please do what you can to see that ACO-REACH and Medicare Advantage plans do not exist, and that Medicare for All does. Your health, and the health of all the people in our nation, depends upon it.

Judy Deutsch  
chair, UUJEC healthcare team



**Join UUJEC & UUSJ at GA—**

**we're on Whova and at Booth 320 in the exhibit hall**

### GA Planning with the UUA Board

The UUA board is hosting a series of zoom sessions for those who will be attending GA, or interested in advising their delegates. Registration links for these sessions can be found at <https://bit.ly/3KlfWr1>.

**What Does Multiplatform Mean for this Year's General Assembly?**

**Thursday, May 26 at 7PM EDT / 4PM PDT**

**Thanks to the UUA board for setting up these sessions so GA sessions can focus on substance, not process! To follow up, join the discussion: <https://discuss.uua.org>**

**General Assembly  
2022 Business Orientation**

**Wednesday, June 1 at 7PM EDT / 4PM PDT,  
or Saturday, June 4 at 4PM EDT / 1PM EDT**