

## **Update on recommendations in the report: Restorative Justice for All**

UUA Board of Trustees January 2006

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### Background

The UUA's Safe Congregations Staff Team appointed The Safe Congregations Panel to provide much needed "outside" insight into the Association's ministry in this area. The report came to the Staff Team. Kay Montgomery met with the Panel at the following General Assembly, to discuss and respond to their recommendations. That meeting led to, among other things, an apology to victims and survivors which Kay made as part of her report to the General Assembly in Nashville.

In December of 2002 I asked the Panel to gather one more time to review the report and recommendations as we were in the process of shaping the Ethics in Congregational Life ministry in Congregational Services. This is a review of recommendations from the Panel's Report with information on action with information about Association response in **bold**.

1.) The highest priority in this plan of ministry and response be the development and implementation of an advocates program based on the model in Section II. We recommend employing Ms. Heather Block, author of *Advocacy Training Manual*, (or a person of equivalent ability and experience) as a consultant to work with the UUA to develop a UU advocates model. Development of the advocates model will include representatives from the Safe Congregations Panel, staff and other UU leaders in the field.

**I followed up with Eleanor Epp-Stobbe (Heather Block's successor with the Mennonite Central Committee Canada). I received an outline of their training process and have copies of the manual they produced. I talked with the persons who, in the past, have served in an "advocate role". We have opted for a liaison model that incorporates much of the wisdom from the Mennonite process and will provide support and information to a complainant. We have two persons ready and willing to serve in that role if needed. Since I assumed responsibility as the point of contact for complainants we have had only one formal complaint of ministerial misconduct. A liaison did provide support to the complainant in this case. Out of that experience we have learned two things that we will change:**

**1.) the liaison will be identified and brought into the process before the formal complaint is filed to provide support during the decision making process  
2.) we will be much clearer about the appropriate boundaries for sharing information about the situation to avoid, as much as possible, the complainant feeling unnecessarily silenced.**

2.) The Association create an Office of Restorative Justice (ORJ) with a coordinator to be named by the UUA Executive Vice-President in consultation with the Safe Congregations Panel. The ORJ mission be to provide ministry/response to victims/survivors of clergy sexual misconduct and coordinate the Association's work toward restorative justice.

**We have no plans to create an office at this time. This process is part of the Ethics in Congregational Life portfolio for the Director for Congregational Services.**

**In March 2001 the UUA administration received the Report of the Ad Hoc Task Force on Ethics and Congregational Life. Kay Montgomery convened this Task Force (after consultation with the president and moderator) at the request of the chairs of the MFC**

**and the Board of Review. Those two bodies had been struggling for a number of years with tensions between them. The team was composed of representatives of the MFC, the BOR, the Board of Trustees, the UUMA, and the Department of Ministry. This Task Force focused only on UUA process. The complaint process we now use drew on their recommendations. The Board received a copy of their final report.**

**The two reports – from the Panel and the Task Force – taken together informed the creation of the Ethics in Congregational Life ministry and the processes by which we respond to complaints of misconduct on the part of religious professionals.**

**The responses in section 3 below indicate how I handle each of the tasks as the primary contact for complainants and victim/survivors on behalf of the UUA.**

**3.) Work with Heather Block (or equivalent person) in the creation and implementation of the advocates program, and coordinate the program on an on-going basis YES**

Participate on the Safe Congregations Team **YES**

Receive all inquiries and complaints for the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, Ministry & Professional Leadership, Congregational Services, the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association and other UU bodies as needed **YES**

Contribute to and learn from interfaith efforts on this issue and keep the UUA informed **YES**

Monitor and annually report to the UUA community at General Assembly and on the UUA web site all activities concerning possible and confirmed clergy sexual misconduct (csm) and all institutional responses including:

Number of inquiries received about csm;

Number of reports received of csm;

Number of reports of csm investigated;

Number of reports substantiated (and not substantiated) of csm;

Number of persons requesting advocate support;

Number of persons offered advocacy support;

Number of persons using advocacy support;

Collect and make available reports by advocates and reports by complainants/victims/survivors regarding how well the UUA ministry/response is meeting program goals;

Direct costs of the program by major component;

Consistently evaluate and publish the success of the challenges to the program by involving advocates and victims/survivors in assessment.

**I work with Kay Montgomery to determine reporting and assessment processes.**

The ORJ have its own UU web page accessible to all congregations with resources which could include pamphlets, this report, links to related web sites and additional literature and material.

**We have an “Ethics and Safety” web site; found at [www.uua.org/cde/ethics](http://www.uua.org/cde/ethics). The site is managed by the Congregational Services Administrator, and is updated regularly.**

The Director of the Department of Ministry no longer serves as the Executive Secretary of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and be involved in ministry/response on an as-needed basis only.

**The Director for Ministry and Professional Leadership (currently David Hubner) is no longer the lead person in responding to complaints of clergy sexual misconduct. Should it be necessary to involve the MFC it is my responsibility to initiate that contact. I work very closely with David on any matter of concern that comes to my attention.**

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) review its procedures to ensure that language and process provide respect, safety, and ease of use for complainants. The Committee consult with former complainants in reviewing procedures. In keeping with the MFC's goal of ensuring that our movement is served by responsible ministry, we recommend that they work together with the ORJ to build a process that lowers risk of filing complaints against ministers by ensuring that a complainant is informed and consulted at critical points in the process. In this way the MFC may contribute to building a model through which restorative justice is possible.

**Conversation with the MFC is on going. The complainant is informed and involved at critical points. Involvement of a liaison earlier in the process will have a positive impact on this.**

The Safe Congregations Team be expanded to include the ORJ Coordinator and the MFC Executive Secretary. The Team's meetings be regularly scheduled.

**Both David Hubner and I are on the Team. I serve as convener. The Team currently meets quarterly and convenes as needed in between our regularly scheduled meetings.**

The printing and distribution of a pamphlet that gives a summary of the UUA's "Ministry and Response to Victims/Survivors of Clergy Sexual Misconduct." This pamphlet be sent to all congregations, UU leaders and staff and a copy be available from the UUA homepage.

**No pamphlet has been printed. Communication about our process is done in various ways.**

The President of the UUA provide continuing leadership on the issues addressed in this report. Opportunities for such leadership could include:

Making a public apology to the victims/survivors of clergy sexual misconduct;

**Kay did this in her report to the Nashville General Assembly.**

Letters of apology sent to all victims/survivors and their families and the congregations effected:

**We have no plans for a letter**

Devoting columns in the UU World to this;

**We offer periodic information in the WORLD and other UU publications.**

Posting a letter to the home page of the UUA web site;

**Bill Sinkford wrote a letter in May 2002. It was (and still is) posted on uua.org**

Writing a letter to clergy and Board members charging them with;

Establishing at the General Assembly an annual President's Lecture (or discussion or workshop) on Safe Congregations, beginning if possible in 2001.

**Congregational Services in collaboration with other staff groups has made this a regular part of our GA programming.**

We acknowledge and support the current Department of Ministry (DOM) practice of informing congregations in the search process of ministerial misconduct. We recommend in addition that the DOM inform all congregations in the Search Process that included as part of a minister's file is a signed or unsigned covenant in which the minister has pledged to abide by the UUMA Code of Professional Practice. Also a part of this file will be an acknowledgement from the minister that she/he has been urged to receive training in an appropriate clergy sexual ethics and/or safe congregations class or workshop. An appropriate class or workshop in sexual ethics and/or safe congregations be required by the MFC of all candidates seeking UUA fellowship.

**The Settlement Office has a mechanism for providing information to Search Committees. We are currently exploring options for offering training/workshops as none are now offered on a regular basis by the UUMA or our theological schools, and the response to recent previous efforts was modest at best.**

The UUA legal counsel consult with legal counsel from faith communities who have progressive ministry/response models grounded in restorative justice-making.

**Our legal counsel does this.**

Funds be budgeted for the ORJ, advocacy programs and a Fund for Restorative Justice for victims/survivors.

**There is a budget for Ethics in Congregational Life. We currently have no fund designated for victims/survivors but occasionally provide support out of other funds.**

All field staff be trained in the process and educated about the advocacy model. Also, field staff be trained in working toward restorative justice for congregations as secondary victims/survivors.

**We will do this in ways that fit the changing roles of District Staff and the uses of District based consultants/teams.**

The complainant be included in any voluntary resolution; restorative justice will be achieved only when ministry/response involves all parties.

**Typically resolution of a complaint happens at the level of Ministerial Fellowship Committee. We are currently engaged in a conversation with the MFC about how they and we (as staff) can be more sensitive to the needs of complainants.**

Once charges are brought against a minister, the Association be in a role of complainant and the victim/survivor in the role of witness.

**This is not currently the process we use.**

