

THREE THINGS I BRING TO CLF

Rev. Meg A. Riley

1. My knowledge of UUism, and the leaders of this religious movement

I have a deep and wide knowledge of Unitarian Universalism, borne from 54 years of experience. I know people's leadership roles, but more importantly I know their passions and pet peeves. This human scale relationship with many people allows me to access them effectively. I can get phone calls returned reasonably quickly from pretty much anyone.



Members of UUA Leadership Council, Annual Retreat
(From left, Meg Riley; Helene Atwan; Director, Beacon Press; Mark Steinwinter, Director of IT; Rob Molla, HR Director; Taquiena Boston, Director of Identity Based Ministries)

I have extensive knowledge of the particular communities who are within the scope of my past or present responsibility at the UUA. These include youth, international UUs, glbt people, people of color, and activists, all of whom are relevant subgroups in the present and future of CLF. As a member of the UUA's Leadership Council, I have a close-up view of the current initiatives of the UUA board and staff, and good relationships with those undertaking those initiatives.

2. My knowledge of interfaith America, and its leaders.

While Unitarian Universalism is my home base, I have spent the past eighteen years building relationships with national leaders across the faith spectrum. I have served on national boards including The Interfaith Alliance, Americans United for Separation of State, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and Interfaith Worker Justice. This means that I have relationships across a spectrum of faith.

I have been part of founding two nonprofits for interfaith work: In 1997, anticipating the Million Man March of the Promise Keepers, I worked with others to launch Equal Partners in Faith, which worked to link racism and homophobia and to challenge the Promise Keepers' premise of being nonsectarian. Before the UUA even had a Public Witness team, I appeared on dozens of national TV shows.

Following the 2004 elections, I gathered with other people of faith at the invitation of John Podesta from Center for American Progress, to reflect about what we might do. I emerged from that meeting as the leader of a group empowered to start another nonprofit, which has become Faith in Public Life (FPL). See www.FaithinPublicLife.org. Next year I will complete two terms as founding board chair of that group. FPL is amazingly effective, well-connected, and creative. Founded on the principle of open source support for religious groups on the ground rather than institutional self-promotion, we have quickly become a go-to group for progressive religious initiatives.

I believe that working relationships with this wide spectrum of people can be invigorating for CLF. UUism doesn't exist in a spiritual vacuum, and partnering makes us visible and viable in the larger world.



With interfaith leaders at a rally for universal health care

3. My knowledge of new media as a creative, energizing, organizing force.

It was my work with Faith in Public Life that compelled me to approach the UUA's then-President Bill Sinkford with an idea about how to do visibility work for the UUA. I pitched a visibility campaign, not for our 'brand name,' but for our religious values. I suggested the campaign be run in an open source fashion, lifting up local congregations and individuals who work in coalitions to live out our values.

Bill empowered me to take the lead in creating a values visibility campaign for UUism. I commissioned Fred Garcia to develop a concept paper for what has become the Standing on the Side of Love (SSL) Campaign, and I have directed that campaign over the past year.

While much of SSL's success lies with the brilliant architecture envisioned by Fred Garcia and the magnificent daily work of Campaign Manager Adam Gerhardstein, I have been behind the scenes every day, every step of the way. We have learned a tremendous amount through working on this campaign, which I believe could be highly relevant to CLF.



While no one who knows me would ever lift up technological prowess as one of my skill sets, what I am good at is understanding what technology can do. I have learned a great deal from a coaching relationship with a new media consulting firm all year and from workshops and conferences.

I think, in this moment, CLF has the chance to really make a difference in the religious landscape not only in the U.S., but around the world. Hundreds of thousands of Americans say they are UU but don't go to church. Hundreds of thousands of people around the globe are looking for us but don't even know our name. With new media, I think we can create something really compelling and lively which will engage and sustain people of faith in unique, interesting, ways.