



UUJEC News & Views: Autumn 2023

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

Medicare Open Enrollment through Dec. 7th (See pages 3 & 4 for details.)

Climate Justice Revival: Follow-Up Program on October 16th

Report: Stop REACH, Sept. 12

Not only was 2023 the hottest year on record, but the BBC reports that it was also the first to exceed 1.5°C of warming for the full year. This offers us all an unmistakable warning that the key limit of the Paris Climate Agreement is in dire jeopardy. Climate scientists are getting jittery, as earlier climate projections were far too conservative and thus far climate-mitigation efforts have lacked the urgency and scale that is necessary to maintain a livable planet.

Everything is changing right before our eyes. This is particularly true of the oceans, which have been absorbing 9/10ths of the heat caused by human-induced climate change. Ocean waters have been getting warmer at ever deeper levels, and in 2023 the temperatures went off the charts.

Despite the work of generations of scientists, researchers, organizations, and activists around the world, numerous earth systems have continued to deteriorate, and tipping points that could undermine the planet’s ability to support life are unfolding before our very eyes.

Thankfully, UUs have been preparing for years with the Green Sanctuary movement, congregational mutual aid, UUing the Vote in support of the Earth Bill and the Farm Bill. Currently, as Climate Revivals are bringing UU congregations together in support of climate awareness and goals, it is also time for UUs to integrate peace as critical for climate justice.

It is time to take all actions necessary to save our planet. With this in mind, UUJEC has launched a new Peace, Equity, and Climate Task Force (PEC TF) that will incorporate the values of our long-standing Green New Deal Task Force. It will also be more pointedly inclusive of peace issues. PEC will address the impacts of artificial intelligence (AI), militarism, and wars on climate. To ignore these impacts is to the detriment of us all, but particularly so for our youth.

For years the US Department of Defense (DoD) has been and remains the largest institutional producer of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in the world.

Globally militaries are responsible for about 5% of global emissions—not including war-related emissions. Even as these are excluded from formal international counts, UUs cannot continue to turn a blind eye to this.

The PEC also carries forward the economic justice concerns central to UUJEC’s own mission. The US DoD budget, which now borders on \$1 trillion a year, is consuming the nation’s resources to the exclusion of climate and human need. It is essential that “national security” address the dire and immediate threat of climate not as a threat multiplier as much as an existential threat to all life on earth.

We invite you to join us for our meetings held the third Tuesday of every month at 5:30 P.M. ET (4:30/3:30/2:30. The Zoom link is here. We also proudly announce that our initial PEC webinar was held with long-time Code Pink activist Marcy Winoograd, who discussed a campaign to *Stop REACH’s War on the Central Coast* on September 12. We will put the recording on to our YouTube channel.

Marcy serves as the volunteer Co-Chair of the Central Coast Antiwar Coalition, Coordinator of CODEPINK CONGRESS and is a co-producer of CODEPINK Radio. She mobilized 41% of the vote in her congressional peace challenge to then incumbent Jane Harman. In 2020 she served as a CA DNC delegate to Bernie Sanders, mobilizing 500 DNC delegates to challenge the influence of neo-conservatives on foreign policy. She blogs on militarism and foreign policy at Common Dreams, CounterPunch, Salon, LA Progressive and Responsible Statecraft. Together with CODEPINK founder, Media Benjamin, Marcy has co-authored “NATO is a warfare alliance, not a global force for peace”, and “Meet the Senate nuke caucus: busting the budget and making the world less safe.”

Cindy Piester
member,
UUJEC board

Table of Contents

Stop REACH pg. 1
CJ Revival Follow-Up . pg. 2
10 Peace Principles . . pg. 2
Medicare Is Open pgs. 3, 4
School Lunches. pg. 3
Letters pg. 4

Revival Follow-Up: UU Theological Grounding for Climate Justice

October 16, 2024: 7 – 8 P.M. EDT

This Unitarian Universalist *Side with Love* webinar will be hosted by **Rachel Myslivy**, who asks “UUs have been at the leading edge of climate action for decades, but how does our faith call us to the work of climate justice?” Join the Green Sanctuary 2030 Community for a watch party of the *UU Theological Grounding for Climate Justice Fireside Chat* with **UUA President Sofia Betancourt** and **UUSC**



President Mary Katherine Morn. Registration is available here: https://secure.everyaction.com/S-A7RxBF_02oBcSfLIUzBQ2 (yes, it has a hyphen).
Note the time for your zone: 6 CDT, 5 MDT, 4 PDT.

10 Principles for Peace

We found these principles, excerpted from a speech by Pres. John F. Kennedy, at <https://ratical.org/co-globalize/JFK10peacePrinciples.html>. In this time of increased militarization, from Ukraine to Gaza and in so many other locations, it is worth taking some time to look back and consider these important, timeless, thoughts.

1. World peace is the most important topic on earth – something on which ignorance abounds and the truth is too rarely heard. Education is needed.
2. Anyone who despairs of war and desires peace has a responsibility to contribute. This can begin by looking inward and examining our own attitudes toward peace, the cold war, the “other”, as well as peace and justice in our own society.
3. True peace is not a Pax Americana imposed on the world by weapons of war. True peace makes life better for everyone. Everyone’s security concerns must be taken into account.
4. Peace is a process, a way of solving problems. World peace, like community peace, does not require that we all love each other, but that we agree to live together in mutual tolerance, submitting our disputes to a just arbiter. World peace does not require a revolution in human nature, but an evolution in human institutions. The UN is a critical venue for fostering peace. It needs to be strengthened as a democratic forum.
5. While the eventual goal is a complete end to war and complete general disarmament, focusing solely on this goal only invites discouragement. It is critical to grasp what can be done now, that can give momentum to the peace process and provide people with hope. What can we do today?
6. No people, nation or system is so evil that they are without value. Our attitude is as important as theirs. Our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet; we all breathe the same air; we all cherish our children’s future; and we are all mortal. Reject enemy images. Seek to understand. Take the trouble to learn what the other side is actually saying. Find common interests.
7. In the nuclear age, peace is a necessity. It is critical that we conduct ourselves in a way that encourages the other side to want to cooperate with us and avoids confrontations in which either side’s only options are humiliating defeat or the use of nuclear weapons.
8. Partners in survival – Not Enemies. Win/Win – Not Win/Lose.
9. There is no simple key, no grand solution. Peace is the result of many acts. Everyone has something to contribute.
10. Peace and justice are connected. It has been said, “Peace is the order that flows from social justice.” Attend to justice and peace in our own communities. The pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war and calls for peace often fall on deaf ears, but we must persist. In the final analysis peace is a human right – the right to live out our lives without the threat of annihilation, the right to a sustainable world for ourselves, our children, and future generations. No one will give us our human rights. We must organize and work to achieve them. Find allies and build solidarity.

Medicare and the UUA Insurance Plan

Through the efforts of a team of visionaries, the UUA Health Plan was created and started enrolling congregational staff in 2007. Sixteen years later, our health plan offers three different plan levels and a Medicare Supplement. Close to 1,000 employees and their families in more than 320 congregations look to the UUA Health Insurance Plans for their health care coverage. The UUA Health Insurance Plan is a great example of what UU congregations, working with the UUA National Office, can do when we work together as a team.

Open Enrollment for UUA Insurance Plans

This open enrollment is solely for the UUA insurance plans including health, dental, accident indemnity and hospital indemnity. During the month of November, if there are any Medicare participants who are enrolled in parts A and B, they can choose to enroll in the Medicare supplement plan during this time if they are interested. Benefit details for the UUA Medicare Supplement are linked here:

- ◆ Medicare supplement home page: <https://www.uua.org/finance/compensation/insurance-plans/health/medicare>
- ◆ Medicare Supplement (Plan F) Benefits: <https://www.uua.org/files/2021-11/2022-UUA-Medicare-Supplement-Comp-Grid.pdf>

The UUA does not offer a Medicare Advantage plan. It has a Medicare supplement plan that works with your Traditional/Original Medicare plan Parts A and B. AS with other supplement plans, the UUA Medicare supplement plan does not cover prescriptions, so drug coverage (Part D) would need to be pursued individually. It is highly recommended to sign up for Part D at the same time you sign up for Medicare, as there is a penalty for late sign-up for a prescription plan.

Contacting Medicare Directly

For additional questions related to Medicare, and to figure out what is right for you and/or your employees, we recommend reaching out to a Medicare representative to help navigate any questions and concerns. Medicare: 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) <https://www.medicare.gov/talk-to-someone>

School Lunch Programs

We recently saw an article in *The Guardian* (a U.K. publication) that disturbed us: *Why Unpaid School Lunch Debt Can Prompt a Call to Child Welfare Services*. (One wonders why a U.K. Publication is often the only place to read such stories, but that is a topic for another day.) The article pointed out that school-lunch debt is considered federal debt (as federal grants fund school-lunch programs for districts or individual students qualifying based on family income), and that schools are required to collect it—what some program administrators say is the worst part of their job. A system in Deptford, New Jersey, reportedly struggling with such collections, started offering only cheese or peanut-butter sandwiches to students with lunch debt; *The Guardian* mentioned a North Carolina elementary school that announced that students with lunch debt would not be allowed to attend an upcoming dance.

Although that community raised money to cover the debt, the situation is troubling. Some districts are even considering lunch debt, especially if students don't bring food from home, to be a sign of potential neglect, and calling the state child welfare agency. Almost always, no neglect is found, but damage is done—such an investigation is traumatic to all family members, and the possibility of such action sets

up an adversarial relationship of distrust between parents and school administration, even preventing students from saying that they are hungry for fear of getting their parents in trouble.

Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania introduced a bill, S 2876, that would address these concerns by cancelling almost all student meal debt, through changes to the government's two main meal programs: the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act and the school breakfast program in the Child Nutrition Act of 1966.



Sadly, and disturbingly, the bill has very few sponsors. We at UUJEC are appalled at collection requirements (even as we note the article's report that one family with \$1000 in debt declared that they would not pay, we believe that such a situation is by far the unusual exception—but the child should not be stigmatized), and will be looking for ways to involve our fellow Unitarian Universalists in ensuring that all students can get meals at school, regardless of their family income., Whether through local action or supporting federal legislation. Please e-mail uujec@uujec.org to join us in this effort.

Image by jemastock on Freepik

Medicare Open Enrollment—Consider Carefully!

With Medicare’s Open Enrollment period starting, new 65-year-olds must make decisions that will affect their healthcare access for decades to come. Various groups have been holding Web seminars to help people sort through the many options available. If you have been able to attend one, you should be in good standing for navigating the process. For more information, visit <https://pnhp.org/> (Physicians for a National Health Program), <https://justcareusa.org>,

(Just Care USA), and <https://www.healthcare-now.org/> (Healthcare-Now!). Also recommended are the official SHIPs in each state—the State Health Insurance Assistance Programs, which are considered to be unbiased. Check our YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/@uujec>, and for those employed by a UU organization participating in the UUA health-care program, see page 3.

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the vital sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

| —President Dwight D. Eisenhower

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. Recently, we have signed the following letters:

- to the Army Corps of Engineers asking that **CO2 pipelines meet rigorous standards**
 - a **UAW letter of solidarity**
 - GreenFaith’s **Multi-Faith Letter for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**
 - to ask President Biden to support a **moratorium on CO2 pipelines**.
 - to call on the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to immediately use equipment and certified staff to detect further toxic releases and hold Shell Chemicals Appalachia, LLC accountable to **reducing emissions and protecting the health of residents in Southwest Pennsylvania**.
 - To FERC, joining comments on the draft environmental review of the **Ridgeline Expansion Project**, to bring methane to a new gas-fired Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) power plant.
 - to deny the **Enbridge Line 5** pipeline proposed Wiscosin rerouting permit
 - in support of the Preventing Unnecessary Deaths During Life-threatening Events
- **(PUDDLE) Act**, which clarifies that the federal Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act includes extreme heat and cold weather events as being dangerous to consumers’ health
 - with the **Climate Justice Alliance** strongly opposing the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Appropriations Bill mandating new oil and gas leases
 - **recognizing access** to water, sanitation, electricity, heating, cooling, broadband communications, and public transportation as basic human rights and public services
 - calling on U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to urgently **address backlogs in work permit processing** and continue efforts to expand, access to work authorization for immigrants and asylum seekers
 - urging the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to **prioritize energy justice in its disaster recovery work**
 - calling on the Biden administration to **protect mature and old-growth forests** from logging.
 - opposing **Shell’s “Dirty Deal” in Nigeria**
 - urging CMS to **include PrEP in ACA risk adjustment model** in the 2026 Notice of Benefit and Payment Parameters
 - Supporting Portland, Oregon’s efforts to pass a **renters’ bill of rights** (realizing that this is a complex issue)

Write icon created by Freepik - Flaticon