

Commendation for the Joe & Lucy Straley “Beyond These Walls” Award 2023

The Joe & Lucy Straley “Beyond These Walls” Award is given annually to a member of our congregation who lives our Unitarian Universalist values in the wider world.

This year’s award is presented to Melva Okun, honoring her work with the Reproductive Justice Task Force of our church.

Melva’s efforts to promote reproductive justice and abortion rights in North Carolina have included helping to organize letter-writing and phone-banking efforts within our own congregation. She organized our members to visit legislators at the North Carolina General Assembly in Raleigh. And, she hand-delivered letters to legislators in Raleigh.

Melva has helped our church to partner with justice organizations and other faith communities. Melva helps our congregation stay connected to the work of the UU Justice Ministry of North Carolina and has recently taking a leadership role in forming an interfaith reproductive justice team across multiple congregations in Chapel Hill.

At a time when reproductive rights are under attack and abortion is being banned in North Carolina and across much of our country, Melva inspires us to show up and speak out for our rights, and to work in partnership with organizations on the front lines of the struggle for reproductive justice.