

Hometown Press Release

## **UUA's General Assembly Affirms Rights for Immigrants and Same-Sex Couples**

(Ft. Lauderdale, June 29, 2008) -- The 2008 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) concluded its five-day meeting by adopting resolutions on a broad slate of social justice issues, from opposing a US attack on Iran to advocating for a higher minimum wage. In addition to tending to official business, the 3,000 attendees from all fifty states and several foreign countries worshipped, celebrated, rallied, and attended classes at "UU University" to learn how to be more effective in their home congregations.

Six resolutions on urgent social issues, called "Actions of Immediate Witness" (AIWs) were passed. Five actions passed overwhelmingly, with little or no debate: End Present Day Slavery in the Fields, Oppose a US Attack on Iran, Raise the Federal Minimum Wage to \$10 in 2010, Extend the Tax Credit for Wind and Solar Power, and Oppose the Florida and California Marriage Protection Initiatives. The only proposed action with a significant opposition was Single Payer Health Care, which still passed by a two-thirds majority. Unitarian Universalists will be active advocates for these positions through the fall elections and beyond.

General Assembly included several workshops and demonstrations in support of farm workers as well as a public rally in Ft. Lauderdale with local leaders from the immigrant and gay/lesian/bisexual/transgender communities. In his remarks at the event, called "Valuing All Families," President Rev. William Sinkford explained, "Our vision of justice is not limited to concern for one oppressed group. It's a vision of justice in which all American families are valued. We say that the Beloved Community must have room for all of us."

In a workshop with the Coalition of Immokalee Farm Workers and later at the microphone speaking in favor of the AIW on field workers, the Rev. Abhi Janamanchi, minister of the Clearwater Unitarian Universalists, stressed the urgency of the plight of agricultural laborers. "Modern-day slavery continues to stain the fabric of the present-day United States," he said.

The delegates voted to adopt a Study/Action Issue on Ethical Eating. Study/Action Issues charge Unitarian Universalists to devote time and attention over four years to an emerging issue that unites theology with practice. By selecting this issue, UU congregations have challenged themselves to address two of the world's biggest problems: social inequality and environmental destruction.

UUA President presented the Distinguish Service Award to Rev. Dr. Forrest Church, Minister of Public Theology at All Souls Church in New York City. This prestigious award is given once a year to an individual who has offered outstanding service to

Unitarian Universalism. Church, a major figure in the Unitarian Universalist movement for three decades, is the author of many well-respected books, including his current and final title, *Love and Death: My Journey Through the Valley of the Shadow*, in which he describes living with terminal cancer. In a lecture Church reaffirmed his belief that death is a central motivator of religion. "The questions death causes us to ask are at heart religious questions: Where do I come from? Who am I? Where am I going? What is life's purpose? What does all this signify?" He concluded, "Death is not life's goal, only life's terminus. The goal is to live in such a way that our lives will prove worth dying for."

Six new congregations were admitted into the Association: Prairie Circle Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Grayslake, Illinois; Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Rocky Mount, North Carolina; Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Tupelo, Mississippi; Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Chesapeake, in California, Maryland; the Washington Ethical Society in Washington, DC; and the WellSprings Congregation in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania.

*The Unitarian Universalist Association is a faith community of more than 1000 self-governing congregations that bring to the world a vision of religious freedom, tolerance and social justice.*

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