

MINUTES

**FORTY SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION
HELD IN FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA**

The General Assembly was convened on Wednesday, June 25, 2007 at 8:00 p.m. by Moderator Gini Courter at the Fort Lauderdale Convention Center, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The Assembly adopted, by a vote of two thirds or more, Rules of Procedure for the conduct of the meeting.

A list of the congregations entered into membership in the Unitarian Universalist Association during the past year was read: Prairie Circle Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Grayslake, IL; Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Rocky Mount, Rocky Mount, NC; Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Tupelo, Tupelo, MS; Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Chesapeake, California, MD; Washington Ethical Society, Washington, DC; WellSprings Congregation, Chester Springs, PA

The Assembly received written, and in some cases oral, reports from the President, the Moderator, the Executive Vice President, the Treasurer, the Financial Advisor, the Secretary, the Board of Trustees, the General Assembly Planning Committee, the Commission on Appraisal, the Commission on Social Witness, the Nominating Committee, the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office, the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, and Beacon Press.

On the basis of an initial report by the Secretary of the Association, a quorum was declared present from the time the meeting was called to order.

President William Sinkford and other members of the Distinguished Service Award Committee, including Roger Comstock, Chair, and Pat Solomon presented the 2008 Award for Distinguished Service to the Cause of Unitarian Universalism to the Rev. Dr. Forrest Church.

Action on Bylaw and Rule Amendments

VOTE ON ESTABLISHING THE NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND DISTRICT

By a vote of two-thirds or more, the Assembly approved changes to the Rules of the Association that establish the consolidation of the New Hampshire/Vermont and Northeast Districts as the Northern New England District.

Rule G-12.2.1. Establishing Districts.

- (a) The districts shall be nineteen in number and named Ballou Channing, Central Midwest, Clara Barton, Florida, Heartland, Joseph Priestley, Massachusetts Bay, Metropolitan New York, Mountain Desert, Mid-South, Northern New England,-Ohio Meadville, Pacific Central, Pacific Northwest, Pacific Southwest, Prairie Star, St. Lawrence, Southwestern, and Thomas Jefferson.

VOTE ON MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIP

By a vote of two-thirds or more, the Assembly approved Bylaw changes that reflect changes in the Ministerial Fellowship Committee practices and Rules.

**ARTICLE VII
COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD OF
TRUSTEES**

Section 7.6. Ministerial Fellowship

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee shall consist of fourteen members as follows:

- (a) Six members who are not ministers appointed by the Board;
- (b) Six members who are ministers in final fellowship with the Association, appointed by the Board; and
- (c) Two members appointed by the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association.

Two members of the committee, and only two, shall be trustees. The committee shall have jurisdiction over ministerial fellowship with the Association as provided in Article XI hereof. The Board of Trustees shall designate a person who is not a member of the committee to be its Executive Secretary and keep its records.

**ARTICLE XI
MINISTRY**

Section 11.2. Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee shall have exclusive jurisdiction over ministerial fellowship except as otherwise provided in these bylaws. It shall make rules governing ministerial fellowship, subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees.

Section 11.3. Admission to Fellowship.

A minister may be admitted to fellowship by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, upon complying with the requirements of these Bylaws and the rules, policies, procedures and requests of the Committee. A minister who is admitted to fellowship shall be admitted to preliminary fellowship for a period of at least three years, be evaluated in ministry, and may thereafter be admitted to final fellowship.

Section 11.4. Fellowship Records.

The Executive Secretary of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee shall maintain up-to-date records of all ministers in fellowship with the Association. These records shall be available only to members of the Committee, persons designated by the Committee, and, in cases of appeals, the Board of Review.

Section 11.5. Termination of Fellowship and Administrative Suspension.

The fellowship of a minister may be terminated by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee for unbecoming conduct, incompetence or other specified cause. Final fellowship may be terminated only after notice by the Committee and opportunity for a Fellowship Review before the Committee.—During an investigation or the pending of a complaint, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee may suspend a minister until a final determination can be made on the minister's fellowship status.

Section 11.6. Reinstatement to Fellowship.

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee may reinstate or readmit to fellowship a minister who has previously resigned from fellowship or whose fellowship has been suspended or terminated.

Section 11.7. Appeal.

A minister in final ministerial fellowship whose fellowship is terminated may appeal the determination of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee to the Board of Review. The Board of Review shall have exclusive jurisdiction to hear and decide such appeals. No other appeal shall be allowed from any decision of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

Section 11.8. Procedure on Appeal.

An appeal to the Board of Review may be heard by a panel of the Board selected as provided in its rules. The Board of Review or its panel hearing an appeal shall limit its review

to an examination of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee's decision, and the information presented to the Committee, including the documents and other evidence compiled during the Fellowship Review, and the reasons articulated by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee for its decision terminating the minister's fellowship. If the minister requests consideration of newly discovered evidence, not previously presented to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, then the matter shall be returned to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee for consideration of that evidence before the Board proceeds with the appeal. These Bylaws and the rules of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee shall be binding upon the Board of Review or its panel. The Ministerial Fellowship Committee's determination of fact and/or credibility will not be overturned unless no reasonable fact finder could have reached such determination, and disputes of fact are to be resolved in favor of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee's determination. The Board of Review or its panel may set aside the decision of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee only where necessary to correct or prevent manifest injustice. The Board of Review or its panel may remand the case in whole or in part to the Committee or take such other action as may be just. The Board of Review or its panel shall set forth its finding and conclusions and will serve upon the affected minister and the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. The decision shall be entered in the fellowship records and shall be final and binding upon all parties. No appeal shall be allowed from the decision of the Board of Review. The Board of Review shall make rules to carry out the intent of this section.

Action on Business Resolution

By a vote of two-thirds or more, the Assembly approved the following Business Resolution.

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT EMPOWERMENT

WHEREAS the Unitarian Universalist Association Bylaws state that our Association promotes "the full participation of persons in all of its and their activities and in the full range of human endeavor without regard to . . . age";

WHEREAS statement 12, "Support, integrate, and retain youth and young adults to

keep our congregations vibrant and growing,” in the Open Space Technology Process at the 2007 General Assembly 2007 received the largest number of votes, 773 (representing 12.4 percent of the votes cast);

WHEREAS the future of our denomination benefits from the full participation of youth and young adults to enliven, grow and sustain our Unitarian Universalist movement, Principles and ideals, including the use of the democratic process within our congregations and society at large;

WHEREAS youth and young adult empowerment is an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and in the lives of other people to create intergenerational equity; and

WHEREAS unique opportunities at the congregation, district and association level for youth and young adult self-direction create synergy for a larger youth and young adult identity and promote communication and connections between local youth and young adults across the Association;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: The 2008 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association urges the Unitarian Universalist Association, its congregations and district structures to

- invite ministerial support to youth and young adults through inclusive worship and intentional presence;
- invest financial support in youth and young adult leadership bodies and programs when viable;
- provide support for youth and young adult staff and volunteers to receive suitable training and resources, including self-directed anti-racism and anti-oppression trainings; and
- attend to the needs of youth and young adult constituents with marginalized identities by providing resources and opportunities within the congregation and at the district and Association levels.

Actions of Immediate Witness

The Assembly adopted by a vote of two-thirds or more the following six Actions of Immediate Witness:

Single Payor Health Care

Whereas: Unitarian Universalists are concerned with the worth and dignity of all people;

Whereas: We spend over \$2 trillion for health care in the United States, yet 50 million people are still not covered and another 50 million are denied adequate care by their insurance companies;

Whereas: Health care is a human right, yet the World Health Organization ranks the United States 37th in the world in health care outcomes although we spend nearly twice as much as any other country, enough to cover everybody with excellent comprehensive health care;

Whereas: A bill has been proposed in Congress, HR 676, United States National Health Insurance Act (Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Bill), that outlines a universal, nonprofit national health care program that will provide guaranteed choice, quality affordable health care and prescription drugs to everyone in the country;

Whereas: HR 676 would remove the current prohibition on Medicare against negotiating pharmaceutical prices;

Whereas: More than 15,000 doctors have signed on in favor of this plan, including two former Surgeons General;

Whereas: The National Conference of Mayors unanimously endorsed HR 676 at their 2008 meeting;

Whereas: Under this proposed plan, we can pay for a comprehensive national health care program with the same money we are now spending by removing insurance companies and cover every single person in the United States; and

Whereas: The bill provides money for retraining and giving priority to those whose jobs as administrators in the insurance industry would be lost as a result of this shift;

Therefore, be it resolved: We call on Unitarian Universalist congregations to become informed advocates for universal access to nonprofit health care financing through social action and adult religious education. We call on individual Unitarian Universalists to urge our members of Congress to co-sponsor and pass HR 676, Medicare for All, or its successors, so that our people and our nation can have the excellent and affordable health care system we deserve.

Oppose a U.S. Attack on Iran

Because: Unitarian Universalist Principles affirm the worth and dignity of every person, justice in human relations, and the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;

Whereas: Bombing Iran's nuclear sites and military infrastructure would probably kill thousands, including many hundreds of civilians;

Whereas: Bombing sites belonging to the Quds wing of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard or imposing a naval blockade would be an act of war and jeopardize settlement of the nuclear question, and a blockade would bring hardship to innocent civilians;

Whereas: The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons affirms “the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop... nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination”;

Whereas: The Bush administration has failed to fulfill its commitment under the Non-Proliferation Treaty “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament”;

Whereas: The National Intelligence Estimate issued in December 2007 states that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003, while keeping the option open for the future;

Whereas: Direct diplomacy between the United States and Iran would be the most effective means of achieving peaceful compliance from Iran, and assurances from the United States that it will respect Iran’s security are essential in order to persuade Iran permanently to forgo a nuclear deterrent;

Whereas: Iran has an indispensable role to play in negotiations to curb sectarian violence in Iraq and curb wider war, and such negotiations are an essential part of an orderly withdrawal of United States forces from Iraq;

Whereas: An attack on Iran would undermine moderates within Iran and seem to vindicate the extremist and unacceptable statements of its current president about Israel and the United States, and it could increase terrorism in the Middle East and globally;

Whereas: War with Iran could disrupt world oil supply, with a severe impact on the U.S. economy; and

Whereas: Communities in the United States are suffering from severe cuts in social service funding because of spending on the Iraq war and can expect further cuts in the event of a war with Iran;

Therefore, be it resolved: The 2008 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association affirms the right of all nations and peoples of the region to peace and security and calls upon member congregations to urge Congress to

- prohibit the use of funds to attack Iran without specific congressional authorization and clarify that the 2002 congressional authorization to attack Iraq does not extend to Iran;
- discourage such an attack by an ally, and barring U.S. logistical support for it;
- urge Iran to cooperate with International Atomic Energy Agency inspections of its nuclear program;
- reject legislation calling for a blockade of Iran;

- ensure that information on Iran provided to the public by this administration is accurate;
- support negotiations for a nuclear weapons--free Middle East, as required by United Nations Security Council Resolution 687, and for the global abolition of nuclear weapons; and
- call for direct, unconditional, bilateral negotiations with Iran.

End Present-Day Slavery in the Fields

Because: Unitarian Universalists affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person; the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large; the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all and respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part;

Whereas: Systematic abuse occurs in the agriculture industry, including sub-poverty wages, no right to overtime pay, and no right to organize; major produce-purchasing corporations profit from the artificially low costs of produce picked by workers in conditions that sometimes become slavery and these conditions are antithetical to Unitarian Universalist Principles;

Whereas: The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a Florida farm workers' organization, has assisted the U.S. Department of Justice in uncovering, investigating and successfully prosecuting five of six cases of present-day slavery in Florida's fields, freeing over 1,000 farm workers;

Whereas: In January 2008, a federal Grand Jury indicted farm labor contractors on charges of conspiracy and holding workers in involuntary servitude and peonage, alleging that employers kept tomato pickers in locked U-Haul trucks, tied workers, and beat workers who tried to escape;

Whereas: In 2005 the CIW reached an historic agreement with Yum Brands, the owner of Taco Bell and four other restaurant chains, to establish a code of conduct with zero tolerance for slavery and better wages and conditions for tomato harvesters, and an agreement was reached with McDonald's in 2007 and with Burger King last month;

Whereas: The CIW won the 2007 Anti-Slavery International Award for uncovering and investigating slavery cases and for innovative campaigns that offer "a successful example of a preventative approach to forced labor," as well as the 2003 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award;

Whereas: Several General Assembly actions since 1969 have addressed these issues and in a 1997 General Resolution, the Unitarian Universalist Association urged member congregations "to work specifically in favor ...[of] the right to organize and bargain collectively, protection from unsafe working conditions and protection from unjust dismissal";

Whereas: Unitarian Universalist congregations, individual Unitarian Universalists and the UUA Office of Advocacy and Witness have assisted the CIW by providing housing, meals, financial support, letters and campaign action support; and

Whereas: Both the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee are members of the Alliance for Fair Food, a network of human rights, religious, student, labor and grassroots organizations in partnership with the CIW;

Therefore, be it resolved: The 2008 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association urges member congregations

- to call for federal legislation outlawing the abuses described above and guaranteeing minimum wages and the right to organize;
- to call for greater support and implementation of the worker protection functions of the Department of Labor;
- to explore means of imposing the same standards on all growers and suppliers, wherever located, from whom the United States imports food or food products;
- to join the Alliance for Fair Food in calling on large produce purchasers to help the CIW enact enforceable codes of conduct against slavery and abuses in the fields;
- to improve the sub-poverty wages faced by farm workers for decades; and
- to work with the Alliance and the CIW in calling upon restaurant and grocery corporations to end slavery and sweatshops in the fields.

Raise the Federal Minimum Wage to \$10 in 2010

Because: Unitarian Universalists as a community of faith uphold the inherent worth, rights and dignity of all people;

Whereas: We have supported a fair minimum wage since 1961, passing a resolution supporting an agricultural minimum wage for migrant workers, and since then our sustained commitment has yielded more than three dozen economic justice resolutions, including a 1997 General Resolution calling for Unitarian Universalist congregations and individuals “to work specifically in favor of mechanisms such as a true single minimum wage, applicable to all workers, that provides an adequate standard of living”;

Whereas: The Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee are members of the national interfaith Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign, hundreds of Unitarian Universalist ministers and faith leaders sent a Letter to Congress in January 2007 urging Congress to raise the federal minimum wage (enacted July 24, 2007) and Unitarian Universalist congregations have supported legislation and ballot initiatives in several states to raise state minimum wages since 2005;

Whereas: The current minimum wage is a poverty wage instead of an anti-poverty wage, the 2007 minimum wage increase was from \$5.15 to \$5.85 and the minimum wage is still worth less than in 1997, when it was \$6.95 in 2008 dollars;

Whereas: By the time the minimum wage reaches \$7.25 in 2009, it will not be worth much more than it was in 1997 and could be worth less if inflation rises more rapidly than the Congressional Budget Office forecasts;

Whereas: The federal minimum wage sets the wage floor for all wages;

Whereas: More than 800 business owners, executives and venture capitalists from every state have signed a statement asserting, "Higher wages benefit business by increasing consumer purchasing power, reducing costly employee turnover, raising productivity, and improving product quality, customer satisfaction and company reputation";

Whereas: A minimum wage of at least \$10 in 2010 is necessary to provide workers with a minimum standard of living;

Whereas: The pay gap between minimum wage workers and CEOs grew nearly fifteen times wider between 1980 and 2006;

Whereas: A minimum wage of \$10 in 2010 would restore the minimum wage to about half the projected average worker wage; in 1968 the minimum wage was 53 percent of the average worker wage and in 2006 the minimum wage had eroded to 31 percent of the average worker wage; and

Whereas: Low-wage workers whose labor is often exploited and invisible support others' unearned privilege;

Therefore, be it resolved: The 2008 General Assembly supports the Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign urging the 111th Congress in 2009 to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10 by 2010. We urge all Unitarian Universalist congregations and individuals to participate by

- educating themselves about poverty and requirements for a minimum standard of living;
- holding Let Justice Roll rallies, workshops and worship services on the weekend of January 9-11, 2009;
- signing the \$10 by 2010 Faith Leaders Letter to Congress;
- participating in other Let Justice Roll activities; and
- advocating with low wage workers.

Extend the Tax Credit for Wind and Solar Power

Because: Unitarian Universalists as a community of faith respect the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part;

Whereas: The 2006 UUA General Assembly adopted the Statement of Conscience on Global Warming and Climate Change;

Whereas: Wind power and solar power partially replace electricity generation by coal-fired plants;

Whereas: Carbon dioxide generation by coal-fired electric plants is a major contributor to global warming and climate change;

Whereas: The current tax credit expires December 31, 2008;

Whereas: The Senate has delayed passing the tax credit extension due to disagreements about paying the cost of the credit;

Whereas: The Senate prefers to delay action until after the November 2008 elections;

Whereas: This delay has caused anxiety in the market, drying up new orders for solar and wind power projects;

Whereas: The solar and wind power industries are primarily small companies, which do not have the capital to survive a six-month period of inactivity; and

Whereas: The solar and wind power industries planned to generate 116,000 new jobs, but may instead lay off workers;

Therefore, be it resolved: The 2008 General Assembly encourages its member congregations to write or petition their senators to vote immediately to extend the tax credit for wind and solar power as proposed and passed by the House in HR 6049.

Oppose the Florida and California Marriage Protection Initiatives

Because: Unitarian Universalists affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Whereas: The Unitarian Universalist Association, its member congregations and individual Unitarian Universalists have repeatedly affirmed their commitment to justice, equality, compassion and civil marriage for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people;

Whereas: The proposed Florida Marriage Protection Constitutional Amendment, which states, "Inasmuch as marriage is a legal union of only one man and one woman as husband and wife, no other legal union that is treated as marriage or the substantial equivalent thereof shall be valid or recognized," will appear on the November 2008 ballot in Florida;

Whereas: The State of California, in response to the recent ruling by the state Supreme Court that overturned its ban on same-sex marriages, is expected to have on its November 2008 ballot a similar initiative stating, "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California";

Whereas: Other states may have similar so-called marriage protection measures on their 2008 ballots; and

Whereas: The amendment will also negatively affect heterosexual couples in committed relationships outside of marriage;

Therefore, be it resolved: The 2008 UUA General Assembly

- urges member congregations to oppose the Florida Marriage Protection Constitutional Amendment, the California Initiative and any similar ballot measures in any other state;
- urges individual Unitarian Universalists to contact family and friends who live in and/or vote in the affected states to inform them of these amendments and to encourage them and their friends and family to vote "No" on them; to write letters to the editor and to support those organizations and coalitions presently working for their defeat; and
- urges the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministries for Florida and California and congregations, clusters and districts in all affected states to use this Action of Immediate Witness to oppose the Florida Marriage Protection Constitutional Amendment, the California Initiative, and other similar 2008 ballot initiatives.

Responsive Resolutions

Three resolutions in response to the reports of officers were passed by a vote of two-thirds or more:

Responsive Resolution for Consultations on Youth and Young Adult Ministry

WHEREAS the Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth has presented a positive report with regard to the future of youth ministry throughout the Association, and

WHEREAS the 2008 General Assembly has expressed its support for youth and young adult ministry through passage of the "Youth and Young Adult Empowerment Resolution" Business Resolution;

AND WHEREAS using grassroots, bottom-up processes involving stakeholders, accountability and collaborative consultation such as Future Search, Open Space and/or Appreciative Inquiry and consultative process could engage the Association in young adult ministries, led by young adults and their allies;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 2008 General Assembly endorses and voices its support for the continued work of the Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2008 General Assembly encourages the Unitarian Universalist Association to consider initiating a consultation with regard to young adult ministries.

Response on Socially Responsible Investing to the Report of Dan Brody, Financial Advisor

WHEREAS we have heard your excellent report and its insight into the need for universal healthcare:

BE IT RESOLVED, in accordance with the eighteen resolutions of the UUA from 1961 to 2007 and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that the UUA will leverage its power through shareholder engagement with the corporate world to further and create avenues for the realization of the right of all people to high-quality health care.

Youth and Young Adult Empowerment Resolution: Accountability

WHEREAS the Moderator, in her report, referenced the “Youth and Young Adult Empowerment Resolution” passed by the 2008 General Assembly on Friday, June 27, 2008, which “urges the Unitarian Universalist Association and its congregations and district structures to

1. invite ministerial support to youth and young adults through inclusive worship and intentional presence; and
2. invest financial support in youth and young adult leadership bodies and programs when viable; and
3. provide support for youth and young adult staff and volunteers to receive suitable training and resources, including self-directed anti-racism and anti-oppression trainings; and
4. attend to the needs of youth and young adult constituents with marginalized identities by providing resources and opportunities within the congregation and at the district and associational levels,”

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 2008 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association

- requests that each member congregation; each district; the UUA Administration, including specifically the Offices of Youth Ministry and Young Adult Ministries and the Youth Ministry Working Group; the UUA Board of Trustees; the

- Nominating Committee; the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and the General Assembly Planning Committee report back annually for the next three years (2009, 2010, 2011) on their planning, implementation, results and recommendations on each of the four points in the above-referenced “Youth and Young Adult Empowerment Resolution”;
- invites the participation of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association and other professional associations; and
 - requests that the UUA Administration create a reporting mechanism for all these stakeholders, inform them accordingly, collect their reports and present a consolidated report to the General Assembly plenary in each of the next three years.

Credentials Report

The final credentials report of the Secretary of the Association was as follows: accredited and attending the 47th General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association were 1224 member delegates, 300 ministerial delegates, 2 credentialed religious educators, 6 associate member delegates, 24 members of the Board of Trustees (not included as registered delegates from congregations), and 19 delegates representing the Church of the Larger Fellowship (included in member delegate count) for a total of 1556 delegates representing 504 congregations, 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 2 Canadian provinces. Total registration for the Assembly was 3020, including 145 youth.

Closing

The Assembly thanked Moderator Gini Courter for her excellent leadership and then voted to adjourn *sine die*.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Kathleen Montgomery
Recording Secretary