

**MINUTES**

**FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE  
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION  
HELD IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA**

The General Assembly was convened on Wednesday, June 20, 2012 at 8:30 p.m. by Moderator Gini Courter at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

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

Three new congregations were recognized as having entered into membership in the Unitarian Universalist Association during the past year: Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Cambria, Cambria, CA; Brockport Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Brockport, NY; and the UU Congregation of Petoskey, Petoskey, MI.

The Assembly received written, and in some cases oral, reports from the President, the Moderator, the UUA staff, 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 Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation.

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.

Members of the Distinguished Service Award Committee presented the 2012 Award for Distinguished Service to the Cause of Unitarian Universalism to the Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley (posthumously).

**Action on Bylaw and Rule Amendments**

**VOTE ON THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD "CONGREGATION"**

By a vote of two-thirds or more, the assembly gave second-year and final approval to amendments to the Bylaws that broaden the definition of the word "congregation." The amended text is as follows.

**Section C-3.1. Member Congregations.**

The Unitarian Universalist Association is a voluntary association of autonomous, self-governing member congregations, which have freely chosen to pursue common goals together.

**\*Section C-3.3. Admission to Membership.**

A congregation becomes a member upon acceptance by the Board of Trustees of the Association of its written application for membership in which it subscribes to the principles of and pledges to support the Association. The Board of Trustees shall adopt rules to carry out the intent of this Section.

**Section C-3.6. Termination of Membership.**

A member congregation upon written notification to the Association may withdraw from the Association at any time. The Board of Trustees may terminate the membership of any congregation that, pursuant to the provisions of Section C-3.5, has been placed in an "inactive congregation" category maintained by the Association but shall do so only after consultation with:

- (a) the congregation in question, whenever possible; and
- (b) the President of the district in which the congregation is located or such other authorized official as the district designates in writing to the Association.

**VOTE ON AMENDMENTS TO ARTICLE XV**

By a vote of two-thirds or more, the Assembly gave second-year and final approval to amendments to the Bylaws that retain the current process for amending Article II, with a study commission followed by votes at two General Assemblies. The new process, however, lets the first General Assembly propose amendments to the study commission's Article II language using a mini-assembly process similar to the one used for many other business actions. The amended text is as follows.

**Article XV Amendment**

**Section C-15.1. Amendment of Bylaws.**

- (a) Amendments to Bylaws. These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote at a regular General Assembly if a proposed amendment has been placed on the agenda; provided, however, that proposals to amend, repeal, or add a new section of these Bylaws whose section number is preceded by a "C" (hereinafter a "C Bylaw") shall be governed by subsections (b) or (c) hereof.
- (b) Amendments to C Bylaws Other Than in Article II. A proposal to amend, repeal or add a new C Bylaw, other than those C Bylaws in Article II of these Bylaws, shall be subject to a two-step approval process.
  - (1) Such proposals must be placed on the agenda of a regular General Assembly and approved preliminarily by a majority vote at such regular General Assembly. Following such preliminary approval, the proposal to amend, repeal or add a new C Bylaw shall be placed on the agenda of the next regular General Assembly for final adoption. Final adoption shall require a two-thirds vote.
  - (2) The text of a proposed amendment which has been approved by one General Assembly, may be amended at any time prior to final adoption. If

the Moderator rules that the amendment to the proposal is substantive, final adoption shall only be by a subsequent General Assembly except that any such proposal that has been under consideration for final approval at three successive regular General Assemblies shall not be subject to substantive amendment and shall be submitted to a vote for final approval at the third such regular General Assembly.

- (3) Such a proposal which, on any vote for final adoption, receives a majority but not a two-thirds vote, shall be placed on the agenda of the next regular General Assembly, at which it may be finally adopted if it receives the requisite approval. If the proposal is not passed by a two-thirds vote at the third regular General Assembly at which it is considered for final approval, neither the proposal nor another proposal that is substantively similar shall be placed on the agenda of the next regular General Assembly.
- (c) Amendments to C Bylaws in Article II. A proposal to amend, repeal or add a new C Bylaw in Article II of these Bylaws shall be subject to the following process.
- (1) Such a proposal shall be admitted to the agenda of a regular General Assembly for the purpose of determining whether the proposal shall be referred to a commission appointed by the Board of Trustees for study. Such a study shall involve member congregations. A majority vote at a regular General Assembly shall be required to refer such a proposal to the study commission. Once the study of the proposal is complete, which shall be completed in no more than two years, the study commission shall submit to the Board of Trustees for inclusion on the agenda of the next regular General Assembly any amendments to Article II that the study commission recommends. The Board of Trustees shall also include on the agenda any amendments that it recommends to the study commission proposal.
  - (2) A motion to dispense with the study process and give preliminary approval to a proposal to amend, repeal or add a new C Bylaw in Article II shall be in order during the General Assembly at which consideration of a motion to refer the proposal to the study process is authorized. A motion to dispense with the study process shall require a four-fifths vote for passage. Such a proposal shall then be placed on the agenda of the next regular General Assembly for final adoption without amendment. Final adoption shall require a two-thirds vote.
  - (3) At the first General Assembly following the completion of the study process, amendments to the Article II proposal may be considered only as follows:
    - (i) During the General Assembly there shall be a mini-assembly held during which amendments to the Article II proposal recommended by the study commission shall be considered.

- (ii) A delegate may submit in writing at the mini-assembly an amendment to an Article II proposal. All such amendments shall be made available in writing to the General Assembly. The Moderator, in consultation with the chair of the study commission, the parliamentarian and legal counsel shall prioritize proposed amendments for consideration by the General Assembly. A majority vote of the General Assembly is required for approval of any amendment proposed in the mini-assembly.
  - (iii) Following the vote on any amendments proposed in the mini-assembly, the General Assembly shall vote on any amendments proposed by the Board of Trustees. A majority vote is required to adopt such amendments. Following the vote on all amendments, the General Assembly shall vote on preliminary approval of the Article II proposal. A majority vote is required for preliminary approval.
  - (iv) If no amendments proposed in the mini-assembly are adopted by the General Assembly pursuant to subsection (c)(3)(ii) above, the Article II proposal shall be submitted for final approval to the next regular General Assembly. Final approval requires a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly. No amendments may be considered.
  - (v) If one or more amendments proposed in the mini-assembly are adopted by the General Assembly, the Article II proposal shall be referred to the study commission. Within six months after the close of the General Assembly, the study commission, taking into account the decisions of the General Assembly, shall prepare the proposal to amend Article II. The Board of Trustees shall put this proposal on the agenda of the next regular General Assembly.
- (4) At the next regular General Assembly following the process described in subsection (c)(3)(v), above, the Article II proposal is subject to amendment only by a three-fourths vote in favor of an amendment submitted to the General Assembly in writing by the Board of Trustees, a district, or a minimum of fifteen (15) certified congregations, as described in Section 15.2 of these Bylaws. Final approval of the Article II proposal requires a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly.
  - (5) If the Article II proposal does not receive the requisite approval at the General Assembly following the completion of the study process described in subsection (c)(3)(iv) or subsection (c)(4), above, neither the proposal nor another proposal that is substantively similar shall be placed on the agenda of the next regular General Assembly.

- (6) If no study process of Article II has occurred for a period of fifteen years, the Board of Trustees shall appoint a commission to study Article II for not more than two years and to recommend appropriate revisions, if any, thereto to the Board of Trustees for inclusion on the agenda of the next regular General Assembly. The Board of Trustees shall also include on the agenda any amendments that it recommends to the study commission proposal. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained herein, proposals to amend Article II which are promulgated by a study commission in accordance with this paragraph shall be subject to a two-step approval process as described in subsections (c)(3) and (c)(4), above.

### **VOTE ON ELIMINATING THE CATEGORY OF “ASSOCIATE MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIP”**

By a vote of two-thirds or more, the Assembly gave second-year and final approval to an amendment to Section C-10.9 of the Bylaws that eliminates the category of “Associate Ministerial Fellowship.”

The amended text is as follows.

#### **Section C-10.9. Pension System.**

The Association shall establish and maintain a pension system for ministers in fellowship with the Association.

### **Vote on a Study/Action Issue**

The following Study/Action Issue on reproductive justice received a majority vote of the Assembly and was referred for study in accordance with Bylaw Section 4.12:

### **REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE: EXPANDING OUR SOCIAL JUSTICE CALLING**

#### **Issue**

Reproductive rights and health services are seriously under attack nationally. Reproductive Justice represents a broader analysis of racial, economic, cultural, and structural constraints on women’s power. The right to have children, to not have children, and to parent children in safe and healthy environments are human rights.

#### **Grounding in Unitarian Universalism**

Unitarian Universalists (UUs) have been on the frontline of women’s reproductive rights and anti-racist work for decades. The commitment to reproductive justice would reenergize that commitment, and pay attention to the important intersections of race, class, and gender. This work would be informed by feminist theologians, reproductive justice advocates, and UUs in the reproductive justice movement.

#### **Topics for Congregational Study**

- Why is focusing on individual choice inadequate?

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- What is reproductive justice?
- How do power structures limit individuals' access to reproductive justice?
- What are the alternatives for ways to give birth?
- What moral questions does reproductive technology create?
- How do sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse contribute to unintended pregnancies later in life?
- How can eliminating racism, classism, and sexism reduce the need for abortion and enable families to care for the children they do have?
- How are pregnant women who use drugs stigmatized, and what are the real dangers and solutions?
- How can transgender individuals maintain their reproductive rights?
- How do economic justice and reproductive justice intersect?

### **Possible Congregational/District Actions**

- Form a Reproductive Justice Committee.
- Join SisterSong as an ally member.
- Invite SisterSong to conduct reproductive justice training.
- Educate congregation on reproductive justice, choices in birth and other relevant issues, including presenting a lay service on reproductive justice.
- Show films about reproductive justice.
- Present a reproductive justice workshop at district meetings.
- Advocate for legislative positions that foster reproductive justice.
- Give money to organizations that help women fund abortions.
- Create interfaith networks and committees.

### **Related Prior Social Witness Statements**

- Reform of Abortion Statutes—1963 General Resolution
- Abortion—1968 General Resolution
- Abortion—1973 General Resolution
- Unitarian Universalist Statement on Survival And Population Control—1970 General Resolution
- For the Right to Abortion—1975 General Resolution
- Abortion: Right to Choose—1978 General Resolution
- A Religious Statement on Abortion: A Call to Commitment—1980 General Resolution
- Resolution on Abortion Clinic Bombings—1985 Business Resolution
- Right to Choose—1987 General Resolution
- Federal Legislation for Choice—1993 General Resolution

### **Additional Information**

- Online Resources (for links, go to [www.uua.org/statements/current/189638.shtml](http://www.uua.org/statements/current/189638.shtml)):
- What is Reproductive Justice? (YouTube)
- Loretta Ross of SisterSong on “Reproductive Justice 101,” Part 1 & Part 2 (YouTube)
- Lucy Felix, Migrant Health Promotion (YouTube)
- A Different Vision for the Reproductive Justice Movement: LUZ Reproductive (YouTube)
- Speak Justice! (YouTube)
- Reproductive Justice Briefing Book: A Primer on Reproductive Justice and Social Change (PDF)
- Reclaiming Choice: Broadening the Movement (PDF)
- Three Applications of the Reproductive Justice Lens (PDF)

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- Important Reproductive Rights Supreme Court Decisions

### **Organizations**

- SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective
- National Advocates for Pregnant Women
- National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
- Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

### **Bibliography**

- Baumgardner, Jennifer. *Abortion & Life*. New York, NY: Akashic Books, 2008.
- Bender, Karen E. and Nina de Gramont, eds. *Choice: True Stories of Birth, Contraception, Infertility, Adoption, Single Parenthood, & Abortion*. San Francisco: MacAdams/Cage, 2007.
- Murphy, Sheigla and Marsh Rosenbaum. *Pregnant Women on Drugs: Combating Stereotypes and Stigma*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999.
- Roberts, Dorothy. *Killing the Black Body*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.
- Silliman, Jael, et al. *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2004.
- Wicklund, Susan with Alan Kesselheim. *This Common Secret: My Journey as an Abortion Doctor*. New York: Public Affairs, 2007.

### **Films**

- *The Abortion Diaries*
- *Made in LA*
- *The Business of Being Born*
- *Entre nos*

### **Congregational Support**

Certifying Congregation

Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, NJ

Endorsing Congregations

- First Unitarian Society of Denver, CO
- Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair, NJ
- Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Myers, FL

### **Responsive Resolution**

By a vote of two-thirds or more, a Responsive Resolution in response to the report of an officer was passed.

### **RESPONSIVE RESOLUTION ON THE DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY**

WHEREAS the delegates of the 2010 General Assembly instructed the UUA Board to create a “Justice General Assembly” in 2012, whose business is accountable to partner organizations doing human rights work in Arizona; and

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WHEREAS the Unitarian Universalist Association has been asked by partner organizations working with the Arizona Immigration Ministry to educate our member congregations about the Doctrine of Discovery and to pass a resolution repudiating it; and

WHEREAS the UUA Board of Trustees has submitted to the member congregations a report explaining the Doctrine of Discovery and why the Board believes it to be contrary to Unitarian Universalist Principles.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the delegates of the 2012 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association, repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery as a relic of colonialism, feudalism, and religious, cultural, and racial biases having no place in the modern day treatment of indigenous peoples; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the Unitarian Universalist Association and its member congregations to review the historical theologies, policies, and programs of Unitarianism, Universalism, and Unitarian Universalism to expose the historical reality and impact of the Doctrine of Discovery and eliminate its presence in the contemporary policies, programs, theologies, and structures of Unitarian Universalism; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the Unitarian Universalist Association to invite indigenous partners to a process of Honor and Healing (often called Truth and Reconciliation), and if one or more partners agree, to undergo such a process about Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist complicity in the structures and policies that oppress indigenous peoples and the earth; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the leadership of the Unitarian Universalist Association to make a clear and concise statement repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery and its current use in U.S. laws and regulations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we encourage other religious bodies to reject the use of the Doctrine of Discovery to dominate indigenous peoples, and that the UUA collaborate with these groups to propose a specific Congressional Resolution to repudiate this doctrine; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that we call upon the United States to fully implement the standards of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the U.S. law and policy without qualifications. In doing so, we support the establishment of commissions that include accountable representatives of the indigenous nations of North America and the Hawai'ian Kingdom.

### **Credentials Report**

The final credentials report of the Secretary of the Association was as follows: accredited and attending the 51st General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association were 1431 member delegates, 346 ministerial delegates, 3 credentialed religious educators, 3 associate member delegates, 25 members of the Board of Trustees (not included as registered delegates from congregations), 20 delegates representing the

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Church of the Larger Fellowship (included in member delegate count), and 85 off-site delegates, for a total of 1808 delegates representing 530 congregations, 50 states, and the District of Columbia. Total registration for the Assembly was 3694, including 301 youth.

Offsite attendance (included above): 85 individuals from 22 states, including 72 member delegates and 13 minister delegates.

**Closing**

The Assembly was adjourned *sine die* by Moderator Gini Courter at 5:30 pm on Sunday, June 24, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Kathleen Montgomery  
Recording Secretary