

MINUTES

**FIFTY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION
HELD IN PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND**

The General Assembly was convened on Wednesday, June 25, 2014, at 7:30 p.m. by Moderator Jim Key at the Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence, Rhode Island.

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

One new congregation was recognized as having entered into membership in the Unitarian Universalist Association during the past year: 2013.

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 Presidential Search Committee, Beacon Press, the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee, 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 2014 Award for Distinguished Service to the Cause of Unitarian Universalism to the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Torquil MacLean.

Action on Study/Action Issue

The assembly considered six possible CSAIs: Renewing and Securing our American Democracy; Gun Violence: A Public Health Issue; Escalating Inequality; Ending the War on Terror; and Empowerment: Age and Ability Reconsidered. After an initial vote in which the two highest vote-getters participated in a runoff, a majority of the Assembly selected Escalating Inequality as the CSAI.

Action on Business Resolution

The Assembly considered and adopted a Business Resolution on Fossil Fuel Divestment, which provides as follows:

WHEREAS, Unitarian Universalist congregations covenant by our Second and Seventh Principles to affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations and respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part; and

WHEREAS, the climate crisis threatens Earth systems through warming, destabilization of the atmosphere and climate, sea level rise, and the acidification of the oceans, of which the brunt of the burden has fallen and will fall on the poorest people in the world, who are least responsible for the crisis; and

WHEREAS, the 2006 Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) General Assembly approved a Statement of Conscience on the Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change declaring “that we will not acquiesce to the ongoing degradation and destruction of life that human actions are leaving to our children and grandchildren;” and

WHEREAS, member congregations have demonstrated their commitment to environmental and climate justice by seeking Green Sanctuary accreditation, forming Climate Action Teams, divesting from fossil fuel companies, or other efforts; and

WHEREAS, if all known fossil fuel reserves are burned, they will produce five times the amount of greenhouse gas emissions required to raise global temperatures beyond 2°C, the level that leaders of 167 countries (including the United States) have agreed represents a threshold beyond which there would be dangerous human-caused interference with the climate system; and

WHEREAS, we have a moral responsibility to Earth, to all beings, and to future generations to do everything in our power to bring about a swift transition from fossil fuels to a sustainable energy economy; and

WHEREAS, a global and growing movement is calling upon universities, pension funds, public entities, and religious institutions to divest their holdings in the 200 major fossil fuel companies listed by the Carbon Tracker Initiative (CT200), which together control 26% of known reserves, in order to break the hold of fossil fuel corporations on markets and governments; and

WHEREAS, the Unitarian Universalist Association is a leader among religious institutions in shareholder activism to halt climate change by ending the use of fossil fuels and, in concert with global investors organized by Ceres and Carbon Tracker, is pressing fossil fuel companies to divest their most carbon-intensive operations and reinvest in lower-carbon energy sources; and

WHEREAS, the guidelines for socially responsible investment of the UU Common Endowment Fund (UUCEF) state that “The UUA seeks to avoid companies that . . . contribute in significant ways to climate change;” and

WHEREAS, the 2013 General Assembly overwhelmingly passed an Action of Immediate Witness for congregations to “Consider Divestment from the Fossil Fuel Industry;”

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this General Assembly calls upon the UUA to cease purchasing securities of CT200 companies as UUCEF investments immediately; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Assembly calls upon the UUA to continue to divest its UUCEF holdings of directly-held securities of CT200 companies, reaching full divestment of these companies within five years; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Assembly calls upon the UUA to work with its current and prospective pooled-asset managers for the purpose of creating more fossil fuel-free investment opportunities, with the objective of full divestment of UUCEF indirect holdings in CT200 companies within five years; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Assembly calls upon the UUA to invest an appropriate share of UUCEF holdings in securities that will support a swift transition to a clean energy economy, such as renewable energy and energy-efficiency-related securities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, notwithstanding any provision above, the UUA may retain investments in CT200 companies in which it is engaged in shareholder activism seeking environmental justice or transition to clean and renewable energy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, notwithstanding any provision above, the UUA may purchase the minimal shares of CT200 companies necessary to permit introduction of shareholder resolutions seeking environmental justice or transition to clean and renewable energy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, notwithstanding any provision above, the UUA shall not take any action inconsistent with its fiduciary duty or that is incompatible with the principles of sound investment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the President and the Treasurer of the UUA shall report to each General Assembly from 2015 through 2019 on our Association's progress on the above resolutions; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that this General Assembly encourages Unitarian Universalist congregations and Unitarian Universalists to review their congregational and personal investments with a view to taking action to end climate change, such as public divestment of their holdings in fossil fuel companies, supporting shareholder activism designed to end use of fossil fuels, and investment in renewable energy and conservation.

Actions of Immediate Witness

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

UUA Support for "Uganda New Underground Railroad" to safely extract LGBTQ people from persecution in Uganda

Our Unitarian Universalist principles, faith and values call us to witness and advocate for human worth and dignity, justice, equity, compassion and the goal of world community.

In Uganda, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) people are being rounded up and killed at an escalating pace.

As of February 2014 a Ugandan law now criminalizes homosexuality. The penalty can be as severe as life imprisonment. Supporters who are perceived as aiding and abetting LGBTQ

people can be jailed for up to seven years. According to the newly formed Quaker group, Friends New Underground Railroad (<http://friendsnewundergroundrailroad.org>), there have been many arrests with few emerging from the jails. University and high school students are being expelled, seminarians are being dismissed from theological colleges, people are being fired from their jobs and evicted from their homes. Lawyers are afraid to represent LGBTQ people and their allies for fear that they themselves may be prosecuted.

The Friends' New Underground Railroad is working with the Friends' "Safe Passage Fund," which was created to "provide travel funds and support to LGBTQ individuals and allies who face immediate threats of arrest, attacks, violence and persecution in countries where harsh laws have fostered a climate of extreme homophobia."

As of late June 2014, the group reports:

In two different incidents in two different locations, we've had 58 LGBT people evicted from their "safe" houses and running for their lives. This follows on the heels of suicides by two people who lost hope of getting out, and also with the names of LGBT folks who are being hunted read out over the radio. Due to some extraordinary acts of heroism on the part of several of our conductors, the 58 are now in two separate locations (32 and 26 people respectively) and temporarily out of harm's way.

The UUA has a proud history, working with the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) to rescue persecuted people in harm's way. The Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office (UUUNO) has been a strong voice at the United Nations on behalf of LGBTQ people in developing countries, especially since President Museveni came to power in Uganda.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the UUA General Assembly calls upon Unitarian Universalists everywhere to:

- Support the Friends' New Underground Railroad by, among other things, contributing financially to it; and
- Join with Quaker Meetings in your area to collaborate on this Action of Immediate Witness; and
- Invite the United Church of Christ and other progressive religious groups in your area to join this action; and
- Obtain and share updated information in worship services; and
- Support efforts to allow resettlement of these asylum seekers in the US.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2014 General Assembly encourages us to join with the Quakers in this movement.

What could be a better symbol of "Love Reaching Out" than to join with Quakers in support of the New Underground Railroad?

Affirming Congregational Commitment to Gun Violence Prevention

BECAUSE Unitarian Universalists affirm the inherent worth and dignity of each person—an unshakeable conviction calling us to self-respect and respect for others;

BECAUSE Unitarian Universalists affirm justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, pointing us toward the larger community and a collective responsibility;

BECAUSE Unitarian Universalists are committed to the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

WHEREAS, we have witnessed recent mass tragedies at Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, Virginia Tech, Aurora, Tucson, Newtown, the Washington Navy Yard and the University of California at Santa Barbara—and the scourge of individual gun homicides numbering close to a thousand each month;

WHEREAS, recent approved resolutions and statements of conscience in UU congregations will hopefully inspire other congregations to emulate our examples, initiating a wave of calls to action spreading across the UUA world, congregation by district by region;

WHEREAS, the scourge of gun deaths in the US continues unabated, reaching levels where no one is immune to one of America's greatest public health epidemics;

WHEREAS, national polls repeatedly validate that vast majorities of citizens—including individual members of the NRA—want sensible legislation requiring expanded background checks restricting availability of certain firearms and large-capacity ammunition clips to people with documented impairments of judgment and anti-social behavior;

WHEREAS, it is regrettably clear that federal and state legislators have so far found insufficient citizen support to offset the divisive leverage of the NRA and even more virulent opposition forces to such legislation;

WHEREAS, while the public may assume that advancing Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) initiatives is futile—that will only be the case if we fail to persist;

WHEREAS, public advocacy for socially-conscious change is most successful when it is based on solid data evidence—and grounded in faith community principles and commitment;

WHEREAS, Unitarian Universalist congregations and affiliates and community resources, experienced with both the process and content of developing Gun Violence Prevention commitment resolutions stand ready to assist and guide congregations in undertaking this worthy and much needed statement of commitment;

WHEREAS, each delegate at this GA has access to a faith community—our respective congregations—representing thousands of fellow members across the US, whose personal involvement can be activated by engagement in dialogue focused on considering passage of their own Congregational Resolution;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that this AIW solicits an endorsement from this General Assembly renewing the focus and call for congregational commitment to work for gun violence prevention initiatives.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the 2014 General Assembly encourages member congregations to take action, such as:

1. Urge the CDC to study and publish data on gun violence;
2. Work for gun safety, background checks and a ban on assault weapons on a national, state, and municipal level;
3. Reach out and partner with interfaith groups and community activists;
4. Dialogue with police, local public health professionals, elected officials and candidates for office; and
5. Speak out in local forums, town meetings and media.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Take this charge back to your home congregation.

Begin a dialogue toward forming your Congregational Resolution Against Gun Violence. Reach out for guidance and resources from the UUA, faith communities, established local groups and state legislatures.

And, say to yourself--“NOT ONE MORE!”

Support the “Pray for Relief” Faith Summit on Stopping Deportations

BECAUSE our Unitarian Universalist principles, faith and values call us to witness and advocate for human worth and dignity, justice, equity, compassion and the goal of world community; and

BECAUSE the 2013 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association adopted a Statement of Conscience on Immigration as a Moral Issue charging Unitarian Universalists to work in support of a moral immigration policy and just and humane treatment for immigrants; and

BECAUSE that statement specifically urges Unitarian Universalists to “cooperate with other Unitarian Universalist congregations, other faiths and secular groups” ... “for the purpose of education and action;” and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress has failed to move forward on meaningful legislation for immigration reform while the number of people being deported continues at the pace of over 1,000 deportations per day totaling more than two million deportations in the last five years with devastating effects on families and communities; and

WHEREAS, President Obama has declared the plight of the almost 50,000 unaccompanied immigrant children detained by United States Border Patrol this year to be a humanitarian crisis while the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has reported that many of the

unaccompanied children coming from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico may qualify for international protection such as refugee status; and

WHEREAS, without adequate access to legal counsel or a comprehensive approach to immigration reform, many of the same children are currently at risk of deportation back to the heartbreaking situations that caused them to migrate; and

WHEREAS, several of our interfaith partners including the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society, Church World Service, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and immigrant rights activists including the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON) have invited Unitarian Universalists to participate with them in a Faith Summit on Stopping Deportations called *Pray for Relief: Not One More Family Separated* to be held in Washington, DC from July 31-August 1, 2014;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2014 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls upon the member congregations of the UUA, their individual members and friends and affiliate organizations to support the Faith Summit by sending a delegation to Washington DC July 31-August 1 and by encouraging that delegation to consider participating in planned civil disobedience, with the goal of persuading President Obama to take executive action to stop the deportations; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2014 General Assembly encourages Unitarian Universalists to promote education within their congregations and communities by using resources provided by organizations including NDLON (www.ndlon.org), We Belong Together (www.webelongtogether.org) and Not One More Deportation (www.notonemoredeportation.com) to respond to the crisis created by the ongoing deportations, incarceration and criminalization of immigrant communities; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2014 General Assembly encourage all the Unitarian Universalist congregations and individuals to write, call and visit local, state and national representatives including Speaker of the House John Boehner and President Obama to advocate for compassionate and fair immigration reform; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the 2014 General Assembly encourages every Unitarian Universalist to find a concrete and meaningful way to reach out in love to help resolve this crisis for the well-being of us all.

Action on Bylaw and Rule Amendments

SECOND-YEAR VOTE ON RECOGNIZING REGIONS AS ONE POSSIBLE UNIT OF GEOGRAPHIC RESPONSIBILITY

The Assembly voted to give second-year approval to amendments to C-bylaws that recognize regions. The effect of the vote is to amend the bylaws to read as follows:

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 the congregation in question, whenever possible; and

The President of the district or region in which the congregation is located or such other authorized official as the district or region designates in writing to the Association.

Section C-13.1. Districts and Regions.

The Association shall support areas of geographic responsibility known as districts or regions.

Section C-13.2. Establishment.

The establishment of districts or regions and the manner of determining which congregations are included in each district or region shall be in accordance with rules adopted by the General Assembly.

Section C-13.4 Autonomy.

Each district or region shall be autonomous and shall be controlled by its own member congregations to the extent consistent with the promotion of the welfare and interests of the Association as a whole and of its member congregations.

SECOND-YEAR VOTE ON FUNDS HELD FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS

By a vote of two-thirds or more, the Assembly voted to give second-year approval to amendments to C-bylaws that deal with funds for the benefit of others. The effect of the vote is to amend the bylaws to read as follows:

Section C-10.6. Authority to Hold Funds for the Benefit of Others.

The Association may hold for investment and distribution funds given to the Association for the benefit of a member congregation, associate member organization, independent affiliate organization, or other Unitarian Universalist organization.

Section C-10.7. Responsibility for Funds Held by the Association.

- (a) Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall have ultimate responsibility for investing the funds [belonging to or] held by the Association.
- (b) President. The President shall invest the endowment funds held by the Association in the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund LLC.

(c) Investment Committee. The Investment Committee shall manage the endowment funds held by the Association, subject to control by the Board of Trustees.

SECOND-YEAR VOTE ON INCLUSION IN THE PURPOSES OF THE ASSOCIATION

By a vote of two-thirds or more, the Assembly voted to give second-year approval to add language regarding inclusion in the Purposes of the Association. The effect of this amendment is to amend the Bylaws to read as follows:

Section C-2.3. Inclusion.

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge [to do all we can] to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an association of congregations that truly welcome all persons and commit to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation.

VOTE ON RULE REGARDING NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Assembly voted by two-thirds or more to amend Rule G-2.3 on Non-discrimination, to read as follows:

Rule G-2.3. Non-discrimination.

The Association declares and affirms its special responsibility, and that of its member congregations and organizations, to promote the full participation of persons in all of its and their activities and in the full range of human endeavor without regard to racialized identity, ethnicity, gender expression, gender identity, sex, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, family and relationship structures, age, language, citizenship status, economic status, or national origin and without requiring adherence to any particular interpretation of religion or to any particular religious belief or creed.

Election Results

Financial Advisor – Larry Ladd (three-year term)

UUA Board of Trustees

Andy Burnette (three-year term)
Rob Eller-Isaacs (three-year term)
Christina Rivera (three-year term)
Susan Weaver (three-year term)

53rd General Assembly
June 25-29, 2014

Credentials Report

The final credentials report of the Secretary of the Association was as follows: accredited and attending the 53rd General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association were 1920 member delegates, 356 ministerial delegates, 3 credentialed religious educators, 3 associate member organizations, all members of the Board of Trustees, delegates representing the Church of the Larger Fellowship (included in member delegate count), and 105 off-site delegates, for a total of 2025 delegates representing 579 congregations and 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. Total registration for the Assembly was 4754, including 316 youth.

Offsite attendance (included above): 92 individuals and 13 minister delegates from 68 congregations and 30 U.S. states.

Closing

The Assembly was adjourned *sine die* by Moderator Jim Key at 3:00 pm on Sunday, June 29, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Harlan Limpert
Clerk