

**MINUTES****THIRTY SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION  
HELD IN ROCHESTER, NEW YORK**

The General Assembly was convened on Thursday, June 15, 1998 at 8:00 a.m. by Moderator Denise Taft Davidoff at the Rochester Convention Center , Rochester, New York.

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

Greetings were received in person from Rochester Mayor William A. Johnson, Jr.; Kathryn MacIntyre, President of the St. Lawrence District; and the Rev. Carolyn Owen-Towle, Chair of the General Assembly Theme Task Force and member of the Fulfilling the Promise Committee. Nancy Bartlett, President of the Board of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, acknowledged and thanked retiring UUSC Executive Director, Dr. Richard Scobie, for his many years of service.

A list of the congregations entered into membership in the Unitarian Universalist Association during the past year was read: Rainier Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation Of Seattle, Seattle Washington; Community Unitarian Universalist Church, Daytona Beach, Florida; Epiphany Community Church Unitarian Universalists, Fenton, Michigan; North Fork Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Northville, New York; Prairyearth Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Lagrange, Illinois; Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Marietta, Georgia; Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Somerset Hills, Pluckemin, New Jersey; Unitarian Universalists of the Cumberland Valley, Carlisle, PA.; Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Door County, Wisconsin; Unitarian Universalists of Saratoga Springs, Saratoga Springs, New York; High Country Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Summit, Eagle & Lake Counties, Colorado; Lake Country Unitarian Universalist Church, Delafield, Wisconsin; Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; Wy'east Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Portland, Oregon; Unitarians and Universalists of Coastal Georgia, St. Simons Island, Georgia.

The Assembly received written reports or, in some cases, oral, from the President, the Moderator, the Executive Vice President, the Treasurer, the Financial Advisor, the Secretary, the Chair of the Finance Committee, the Board of Trustees, the 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 the Church of the Larger Fellowship.

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 Buehrens and the Rev. Wayne Arnason presented the annual Award for Distinguished Service to the Cause of Unitarian Universalism to the Rev. Dr. C. Leon Hopper, Jr.

### **ACTION ON BYLAW AMENDMENTS**

#### **VOTE ON ACCREDITED RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR DELEGATES**

The Assembly considered a Bylaw amendment to Section 4.8 which would acknowledge the fact that there are no longer Accredited Religious Educators employed in any Unitarian Universalist congregation and would delete this designation from the Bylaws. This proposed amendment was deferred by adoption of a motion to postpone action.

#### **VOTE ON STATEMENTS OF CONSCIENCE**

The Assembly considered a Bylaw amendment to Section 4.12 I) which would require the President of the UUA to report any action taken by the Association to implement UUA Statements of Conscience. This proposed amendment was defeated.

#### **VOTE ON MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

The Assembly voted on an amendment to Bylaw Section 7.6 which would result in the requirements for ministers serving on the Ministerial Fellowship Committee conforming to the standards for service on the Board of Review. The new text is as follows:

##### *Section 7.6*

(b) six members who are ministers in final fellowship with the Association, with at least one from each category of ministry including community ministry, appointed by the Board; and .

### **ACTION ON BUSINESS RESOLUTIONS**

The Assembly adopted, by a vote of two-thirds or more, the following business resolutions:

#### **WOMEN'S RIGHTS ANNIVERSARY**

WHEREAS the year 1998 marks the 150th anniversary of the women's rights convention in the United States, held at Seneca Falls and Rochester, New York; and

WHEREAS the year 2000 will mark the 150th anniversary of the much larger convention at Worcester, Massachusetts, and both conventions and their purposes, which included women's rights and an end to slavery; had Unitarians and Universalists in strong support, and

RECOGNIZING the continuing involvement of our people and our faith in defense of women's rights;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Unitarian Universalist Association shall within this two-year period:

1. Make efforts to note the milestones in the critical anti-slavery efforts of women and the women's rights struggle, from the 1848 Convention to the present, to be presented to the 1999 General Assembly and to make such information available to our congregations;
2. Advocate for the preservation, marking, and memorialization of historic sites important to this historic effort, and urge districts and congregations to work on local and regional efforts to the same end;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the President of the UUA shall appoint a committee to coordinate and report on these efforts at the UUA General Assembly in the year 2000: and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the UUA shall spend no more than \$7,500 in its activities to this end.

### **INCREASING THE VISIBILITY OF IARF AND ICUU**

WHEREAS the principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association include the goal of world community, and respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part; and

WHEREAS the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) is an important resource by which we as a denomination connect with and support liberal religious ideas internationally; and

WHEREAS the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) provides us with necessary formal structure within which both Unitarians and Universalists can continue their historic policy of proactive involvement with our co-religionists around the world; and

WHEREAS the IARF and ICUU are relatively invisible to our congregations and members:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this General Assembly affirms and celebrates the world-wide connections of our faith, and seeks to strengthen those connections for our mutual benefit:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Unitarian Universalist Association develop policies and initiate programs which promote knowledge and support of IARF and ICUU and their work.

### **STUDY/ACTION ISSUE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

The following Study/Action Issue for Social Justice received a majority vote of the Assembly and was referred for study in accordance with Bylaw Section 4.12(c):

## **ECONOMIC INJUSTICE, POVERTY, AND RACISM**

### **Issue:**

How can Unitarian Universalists better understand the links among economic injustice, poverty, and racism? How can we use that knowledge to develop a stronger anti-racist role for Unitarian Universalists?

### **ACTIONS OF IMMEDIATE WITNESS**

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

### **ADDRESSING THE HEALTH INSURANCE CRISIS**

WHEREAS millions of Americans are presently denied medical insurance and, in effect, denied the right to basic health care because the United States government, employers, and insurance industry have been unable to implement a national health insurance program; and

WHEREAS this has been brought home to our Association by the June 1998 action of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, which has notified the Unitarian Universalist Association that its group medical plans will not be renewed on September 1, 1998, so that our Association, along with several other religious groups in the United States, is being forced to discontinue medical insurance for its clergy and staff because of costs, and over 70 clergy, their families and/or partners, are in danger of not being able to obtain replacement health insurance with affordable premiums, if at all;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 1998 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

1. decries a system where the values of the medical and insurance marketplace and the pursuit of profits in the guise of managed care conspire to deprive United States citizens of basic health care;
2. urges individual Unitarian Universalists and member societies to study the inequities of the present health insurance situation in the United States and to take assertive public positions to seek remedies at the state and federal level;
3. calls on Unitarian Universalist congregations and individual Unitarian Universalists in the United States to urge members of Congress and the Administration to proceed toward the creation of a comprehensive health care system that will guarantee affordable medical, hospital, and mental health care (both inpatient and outpatient) to all persons regardless of age, place of employment, or personal financial circumstances;
4. encourages the promotion of a Patient's Bill of Rights for the protection of confidentiality, freedom of choice of practitioners, and parity for reimbursement of mental and medical conditions; and

5. urges the staff and volunteer leadership of the Unitarian Universalist Association to assist all persons in the Unitarian Universalist Association Group Insurance Plan who may lose coverage to find replacement health insurance with premiums that can be afforded by their employer-congregations.

### **POLITICAL CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM**

Among the issues of national and state political importance in the United States, none is of more vital and immediate concern to the healthy functioning of an informed electorate than reform of political campaign financing. It is elemental that persons, businesses, and associations with large purses can, do, and will influence the positions of candidates to whom large contributions are made, using "soft money," which is not subject to existing state and federal regulations.

At the national level, the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 1998, generally known as the Shays-Meehan Bill, H.R. 3526, is pending in the United States Congress. This legislation prohibits national political parties, federal candidates, and officials from raising, spending, or directing "soft money" and prohibits state parties from spending "soft money" for activities that affect federal elections.

Sanctimony has marked much of the talk in both houses of the United States Congress, but attempts to avoid commitment have marked the legislative process. Receivers of large contributions like to receive large contributions. Such receivers have offered disabling amendments, and more are threatened, to destroy the clean and clear thrust of the Shays-Meehan Bill.

At the state and local level, campaign finance reform is being proposed via referendum and other measures. For example, Massachusetts will have a referendum on the ballot in November of 1998.

Because the use of the democratic process is a cherished fundamental of Unitarian Universalism, the 1998 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association urges:

1. individual Unitarian Universalists in the United States to inform their Representatives and Senators of their strong support of an unamended Shays-Meehan Bill (H.R. 3526), and to support state and local legislation with similar objectives; and
2. Unitarian Universalist congregations in the United States to encourage, support, and facilitate such action by their individual members.

## FAIR TREATMENT FOR NATIVE AMERICANS

The United States has a unique legal relationship with Indian tribal governments as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, in treaties, in statutes, in court decisions, and in executive orders. However, the indigenous peoples of the United States continue to suffer grievously from economic, social, political, and spiritual injustice and neglect.

We fully support and encourage President Clinton's Initiative on Race and his call for healing all forms of racial abuse and neglect. Yet at the March 1998 meeting of the Advisory Board for the Initiative on Race in Colorado, the absence of representation by indigenous peoples on the Advisory Board and the reluctance of the Advisory Board and staff to engage the audience in direct dialogue on issues of concern led to Native American protests. These protests not only changed the course of that meeting dramatically, but also led to pressure on the President from many groups and individuals to rethink policy and action toward and on behalf of indigenous peoples.

The 1998 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association regrets the failure of the government of the United States to assert a vigorous and moral leadership in ending colonial practices and systemic, as well as individual, discrimination and abuse toward the indigenous peoples of the United States. The Assembly asks Unitarian Universalists in the United States to take action to urge the United States government to begin a program of reconciliation and renewal by way of the following:

1. holding at least one Race Initiative hearing on an Indian reservation prior to the cessation of the current work of the Race Advisory Board;
2. setting up a Presidential Commission on Indigenous Race Relations with a Native chair and majority indigenous representation;
3. initiating through the Presidential Commission a process for apology, financial reparation, and healing for the historic injustice suffered by indigenous peoples in their relations with the United States government and the other citizens of the United States, finding inspiration in the Canadian government's recent action of apologizing to and allocating funds for its indigenous peoples;
4. creating an indigenous desk at the White House to act as a liaison between the administration and indigenous nations; and
5. receiving assurance of the President's veto of all legislation that would diminish the sovereignty and religious freedoms of indigenous nations.

The 1998 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association also calls on its member congregations and individuals to share this Action of Immediate Witness with other religious groups in their communities.

**CLOSE THE U.S. ARMY SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS**

WHEREAS the United States Army School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning, GA, has provided training for over 59,000 Latin American military personnel, and is currently training hundreds of such soldiers per year at an annual cost to the United States taxpayers of nearly 20 million dollars. This training includes counter-insurgency tactics that have resulted in the assassination of religious leaders, labor organizers, and human rights advocates, and the massacre of thousands of unnamed poor;

WHEREAS in September 1996, the Pentagon released seven training manuals used by the SOA throughout the 1980s recommending interrogation techniques including torture, execution, blackmail, and the arrest of relatives;

WHEREAS in a February 12, 1998, report, the Latin American Working Group, a project of the National Council of Churches, revealed severe, ongoing problems in curriculum oversight at the SOA and a complete lack of monitoring of SOA graduates;

WHEREAS since the 1994 uprising in Chiapas, Mexico has had the highest number of Latin American military personnel receiving United States military training; and, concurrently, Representative Joseph Kennedy's January 12, 1998, "Dear Colleague" letter directly linked SOA graduates to the December 22, 1997, massacre in Chiapas; and, in addition, Amnesty International reports that throughout 1997 the Mexican Army committed "widespread human rights violations" during their operations in Chiapas;

WHEREAS twenty-five United States citizens, including five Unitarian Universalists, have been arrested and imprisoned for petitioning for the closing of the SOA, yet SOA graduate officers cited by the United Nations Truth Commission for atrocities in El Salvador have not been imprisoned;

WHEREAS the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey has passed a resolution urging the President and Congress of the United States to support the closure of the SOA; and

WHEREAS the Faith in Action Department of the Unitarian Universalist Association has issued a statement of support for the protesters, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee has passed a resolution on February 22, 1998, to close the SOA, and numerous other religious groups representing many denominations have called for the closure of the SOA;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 1998 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association urges individual Unitarian Universalists, member congregations, and the Unitarian Universalist Association to urge their Congressional representatives to co-sponsor H.R. 611 or S. 980 (or to commend them if they already have), advocate for its immediate passage, and take all other appropriate action to secure the closure of the SOA and the cessation of all operations and programs therein or in any other location;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 1998 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association requests the President of the United States to grant immediate and total clemency for all persons imprisoned for their peaceful participation in protests to close the SOA; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the 1998 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association requests a congressional investigation to determine the accountability of those persons who ordered, prepared, and distributed the SOA torture manuals in direct defiance of the United States and international law.

### **PAYMENT OF THE UNITED STATES DEBT TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

WHEREAS the United States owes the United Nations (UN) approximately \$1.6 billion in dues;

WHEREAS Canada has paid its UN dues in full and on time;

WHEREAS any UN member state that fails to pay its dues for two consecutive years may lose its vote in the UN General Assembly;

WHEREAS if the United States makes no further payment in 1998, it could lose its vote by December 31;

WHEREAS as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and in fulfillment of its treaty obligations as a signatory to the UN Charter, the United States should support the UN according to its dues obligations under the UN Charter; and

WHEREAS, because of amendments unrelated to the primary obligation of the United States to pay its debt of dues, legislation addressing this issue is currently stalled in the United States Congress;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 1998 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls on the Association and its member congregations to urge the United States to pay its obligations to the UN promptly, in full, and without any reservations or conditions.

### **RESPONSIVE RESOLUTION**

A resolution responsive to reports of officers was introduced which would have had the effect of urging the Board of Trustees to set budget priorities in a way that would make a statement about the 1997 General Assembly resolution entitled "Working for a Just Economic Community" and the Study/Action issue on Economic Injustice, Poverty, and Racism. This proposed resolution was not adopted by the Assembly.

**CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT**

The final credentials report of the Secretary of the Association was as follows:

Accredited and attending the 37th General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association were 1383 member delegates, 459 ministerial delegates, 5 associate member delegates, 24 members of the Board of Trustees (not included as registered delegates from congregations, 11 delegates from the Church of the Larger Fellowship, for a total of 1842 delegates representing 632 congregations, 47 states, the District of Columbia, Mexico, and 8 Canadian provinces. Total registration for the Assembly was 4004, including 357 youth.

The Assembly then voted to adjourn *sine die*.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Kathleen Montgomery  
*Recording Secretary*