

MINUTES**FORTY SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION
HELD IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

The General Assembly was convened on Thursday, June 26, 2003 at 8:30 p.m. by Moderator Diane Olson at the Hynes Convention Center, Boston, Massachusetts.

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: Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Glenwood Springs, Glenwood Springs, CO; Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Central Michigan, Mt. Pleasant, MI; Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rock Valley, Rockford, IL; Thermal Belt Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Tryon, NC; Kodiak Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Kodiak, AK.

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 Chair of the Finance Committee, the Board of Trustees, the General Assembly Planning Committee, the Commission on Appraisal, the Commission on Social Witness, the Nominating Committee, the Committee on Committees, the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office, the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, Beacon Press, the Unitarian Universalist Washington Center for Advocacy and Witness, the Annual Program Fund Continental Committee, the Committee on Socially Responsible Investing, the Whitney Young Fund, the Chair of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, Starr King School for the Ministry, and Meadville/Lombard Theological School.

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 G. Sinkford, Moderator Diane Olson, and Norma Poinsett, Chair of the Distinguished Service Award Committee, presented the annual Award for Distinguished Service to the Cause of Unitarian Universalism to the Rev. Dr. Spencer Lavan.

ACTION ON BYLAW AND RULE AMENDMENTS

VOTE ON ESTABLISHING DISTRICTS

By a vote of two-thirds or more, the Assembly gave second-year and final approval to an amendment to Section C-12.2 that makes clearer the ways in which congregations are assigned to districts. The amended text is as follows:

Section C-12.2. Establishment.

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

VOTE ON NON-SUBSTANTIVE BYLAW CHANGE

By a vote of two-thirds or more, the Assembly approved a non-substantive amendment to Bylaw Section 4.12(c)(3) to make the language of the Bylaw conform to the current UUA staff structure. The amended text is as follows:

Section 4.12. UUA Statements of Conscience

.. (c) (3) After one Study/Action Issue for Social Justice has been referred for study in accordance with (ii) above, the Advocacy and Witness staff shall conduct a workshop to discuss processes for study and action on the selected issue, and shall make available a preliminary study/action packet to all attendees of the General Assembly. Such packet shall be mailed to all congregations promptly following the General Assembly.

An additional package of educational materials prepared by the Advocacy and Witness staff pertaining to the selected Study/Action Issue for Social Justice shall be mailed to the member congregations and the districts not later than the last Friday in October immediately following the General Assembly. . . .

VOTE ON LANGUAGE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Assembly voted in favor of an amendment to Section C-2.3 that changes non-discrimination language to conform to more recent understandings from the Association's anti-oppression work. The effect of the vote is to place this Bylaw amendment proposal on the Final Agenda of the 2004 General Assembly for final adoption, which will require a two-thirds vote. The new text is as follows:

Section C-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 race, ethnicity, gender, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, 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.

VOTE ON PROCESS FOR SETTING ANNUAL PROGRAM FUND GOALS

The Assembly passed an amendment to Rule G-10.1.3 that changes this Section to conform to good business practice and actual practice. The amended text is as follows:

Rule G-10.1.3. Estimated Income.

Income amounts in the budget for the Current Fiscal Year shall represent the Board's best estimates of income from all sources. Income from the Annual Fund as so estimated shall be an amount which is not more than 7 per cent greater than the actual Annual Fund income of the fiscal year preceding the Current Fiscal Year. In the budget for the Succeeding Fiscal Year income from the Annual Fund shall be estimated at an amount which represents the Board's best estimate of the achievable results for such year.

BUSINESS RESOLUTION

The Assembly considered a proposed Business Resolution titled "Registry of Marriages, Same-Sex Unions, and Domestic Partnerships." The motion was tabled indefinitely.

UUA STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE

By a vote of two-thirds or more, the Assembly adopted the following Statement of Conscience:

Economic Globalization

2003 UUA Statement of Conscience

Summary of the Statement of Conscience

While economic globalization has helped some people attain higher standards of living, it has marginalized and impoverished many others and has resulted in environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources. The benefits of economic globalization have been inequitably distributed and have not reached many people around the world. Our vision of the world as an interconnected web challenges us to turn from self-serving individualism toward a relational sense of ourselves in a global community, and toward practices that help create economic structures designed to serve the common good. We are called to bring our Unitarian Universalist Principles to our understanding of economic globalization and to help mitigate its adverse effects.

Economic Globalization and Its Consequences

Economic globalization, broadly understood, is the growing global integration not only of markets but also of systems of finance, commerce, communication, technology, and law that bypass traditional national, cultural, ethnic, and social boundaries.

Proponents of economic globalization argue that it leads to more efficient division of labor, greater specialization, increased productivity, higher standards of living and wealth, and ultimately the end of poverty. Proponents also argue that recent economic growth has greatly contributed to the high standard of living enjoyed by many within the developed world and raised living standards of many people formerly living in abject poverty. Many others have not made such gains.

Opponents argue that economic globalization detaches markets from essential regulations meant to protect national sovereignty, the democratic process, human rights, labor rights, and the environment. Opponents also argue that the policies and practices of industrialized countries and transnational corporations drive the market forces of economic globalization. There is no effective global regulatory system controlling economic globalization.

The rules governing economic globalization have been created through trade agreements, international law, and institutions dominated by industrialized countries. These rules favor those with access to capital, legitimizing measures such as dropping tariffs, eliminating capital controls, enforcing intellectual property rights, privatizing public services, and weakening regulations that protect labor, health and safety, and the environment. Economic globalization is increasingly perceived by the rest of the world as American economic imperialism. Many Americans, accustomed to an individualistic and competitive culture, are insensitive to the realities of abject poverty, cultural erosion, and environmental degradation. As a result, systematic exploitation of labor and the environment goes unnoticed as do coercive monopolistic pricing of goods and services, criminal evasion of local legal controls, growing debt among developing countries, widening economic disparities, and devastation of traditional cultures. Unitarian Universalists are concerned about the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a corporate elite who are dictating the terms of major economic and social parameters throughout the world. Together these factors generate profound anger and despair that fuel ideological and religious fundamentalism, increasing violence, and international terror.

A Unitarian Universalist Response to Economic Globalization

As people of faith, we are challenged to find ways to promote global economic fairness while maintaining the dynamism of the marketplace. As Unitarian Universalists, we affirm and promote:

- **The acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth, and a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.** We are called to better understand the complexities of economic globalization, mindful that deeper global awareness enriches our individual and communal spirituality. We must resist the arrogance of supposing that our own experience of truth is universal. We affirm the value of congregational study groups devoted to a cyclical process of study, action, and reflection that includes monitoring our investments, the products and services we consume, the ways we consume them, the costs we bear to secure them, and the burdens we place on others in so doing. We must commit ourselves to actions that support and assist rural cultures that provide sustainable livelihoods adapted to the possibilities and limitations of the natural resource base. We must resist those who push unwanted globalization, industrial farming, or commodity agreements on nations and communities that wish to safeguard sustainable rural livelihoods and traditions.

- **The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all, and justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.** Wealthy countries need to open their markets to agricultural goods, textiles, and other products from developing countries. We must become more effective advocates for increased funding of international economic, environmental, and humanitarian assistance as well as the expansion of educational opportunity. Existing debt of the poorest nations should be forgiven as part of a strategy under which such countries become self-sustaining. Certain public goods like water and education should remain under the protection of the state for the benefit of all citizens. We need to work to ensure that intellectual property provisions in international trade agreements take into account the rights of all people to medications, seed, fertilizer, and pest control.
- **The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within society at large.** We must commit to participate in local, state, and national affairs regarding economic globalization, and to partner with other progressive community organizations to advocate for just economic policies and laws. We need to hold our political and corporate leaders accountable for their policies and actions. We advocate the increased use of socially screened investment policies and participation in shareholder accountability initiatives. Trade agreements, such as NAFTA (The North American Free Trade Agreement) and the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas), should safeguard democratically decided public policies, statutes, and regulations that protect children, labor, and the environment of all parties. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and other international financial and trade institutions must become transparent and democratic and support self-determination for communities and countries.
- **The inherent worth and dignity of every person.** We are called to participate in the work of organizations that advocate for human rights, fair employment standards, and environmental justice. Countries are responsible for requiring foreign and domestic companies to pay fair taxes, ensure their workers a locally defined living wage, provide a healthy and safe work environment, and respect the right of their workers to bargain collectively in independent labor unions and to engage in strikes and other job actions when necessary. The standards of the International Labour Organization of the United Nations should be incorporated in all trade agreements. We advocate measuring the success of an economy not only by fiscal performance but also by quality-of-life indicators such as child mortality rates and literacy and education levels. We recognize that developed nations, such as ours, need to reduce consumption of resources.
- **Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.** We open our minds and hearts to the ideas, ideals, and dreams of others pursuing a more equitable, sustainable, and environmentally sound global community. We advocate for trade agreements and other international accords that safeguard the environment, and we must monitor their enforcement. We need to hold corporations, as well as governments, accountable for the damage they do to the environment by their policies and practices. We need to guide our investments and consumption toward companies that produce, provide, and purchase goods and services that are in accord with environmental, health and safety, and fair wage standards. We acknowledge our own responsibility to refrain from disproportionately consuming natural resources or transforming resources into waste and pollution.

Conclusion

We are challenged by the reality that many of us work for the very institutions driving economic globalization. We acknowledge our fears and resistance to change as we benefit from the global economic processes that foster inequity. The transformation we experience as we move from ignorance to knowledge and from speech to action is not easy. Nonetheless, we are called to become competent advocates. Seeing the world as an interconnected web challenges us to turn from self-serving individualism toward a relational sense of ourselves in a global community, and toward practices that help create economic structures designed to serve the common good.

***Background:** This Unitarian Universalist Association Statement of Conscience builds upon five previous social witness statements on economic, environmental, and labor issues adopted between 1972 and 2001. In June 2001, the General Assembly of the UUA selected “Economic Globalization” as the issue suggested to congregations for two years of study, action, and reflection. The Commission on Social Witness (CSW) received initial reports from congregations and districts in March 2002. In June 2002, the CSW held a workshop on this issue at General Assembly. A draft Statement of Conscience was distributed to all congregations and districts for their reflection and feedback in the fall of 2002. Comments were reviewed by the CSW at its March 2003 meeting. A revised draft was on the final agenda of the 2003 General Assembly. A Mini-Assembly was held on Friday afternoon, June 27, 2003, to receive proposed amendments. Delegates of the 2003 General Assembly passed this statement with a clear required two-thirds majority. This text is available for immediate media release but remains unofficial until confirmed by the Board of Trustees. The text of other UUA Statements of Conscience can be found at the UUA website (www.uua.org/actions) and the CSW website (www.uua.org/csw).*

STUDY/ACTION ISSUE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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

Issue: How can Unitarian Universalists successfully advocate for reform of the criminal justice and prison systems, even as the prison industry expands to accommodate more people and becomes increasingly inhumane and unjust?

ACTIONS OF IMMEDIATE WITNESS

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

AmeriCorps

Congress created AmeriCorps ten years ago. Since then, it has provided America's youth with numerous opportunities for public service. Through a unique combination of federal monies and nearly \$1 billion in matching private dollars, over 900 programs -- ranging from Teach for America to City Year -- have been created nationwide. More than 200,000 young Americans, including Unitarian Universalists, have worked in AmeriCorps programs

- tutoring, mentoring, and providing safe, educational, and caring after-school programs for thousands of at-risk children;
- building urban playgrounds, restoring community centers, immunizing children, caring for senior citizens, and protecting our urban and rural environments; and
- organizing thousands of volunteers and inspiring a "can-do" civic spirit across the nation.

This extraordinary public-private partnership is now in jeopardy. On June 16, 2003, the Corporation for National and Community Service announced dramatic cuts in funding--ranging from 50 percent to 95 percent in each state. Politicians have given AmeriCorps lip service. The President has called for all Americans to be "citizens," not just "spectators." In spite of these laudable sentiments, however, the federal budget has been stripped of the funds needed to make them a reality.

As a result, AmeriCorps programs are closing all over the country. The number of volunteers is being slashed from 67,000 to 28,000. Communities, schools, and children are losing their mentors, tutors, teachers, and builders. American youth have lost this outlet for their idealism. The United States is at risk of losing the chance to instill public spiritedness in a new generation.

The General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association therefore has a timely opportunity to put its weight behind this endangered program at a significant point in the decision-making process. Aware of the dynamism and talent of its own young members, this General Assembly is determined to see AmeriCorps survive and prosper.

The 2003 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association therefore resolves to urge Unitarian Universalists individually and in their congregations to prevail upon the President and the Congress to take all action necessary to restore the funding for AmeriCorps, including the passage of an immediate appropriation of \$200 million, and thereby enable the federal government to meet its obligation in the public-private partnership. This modest investment will pay dividends to all of us vastly in excess of the cost.

Depleted Uranium Munitions

Whereas depleted Uranium (DU) is radioactive and toxic and may cause cancer and genetic damage;

Whereas DU is a by-product of uranium enrichment for nuclear weapons and energy production and is used militarily in armor-piercing munitions, bombs, and missiles because its density gives it great armor penetrating power;

Whereas DU explodes on impact to form shrapnel and fine, inhalable dust;

Whereas about 300 metric tons of DU munitions were used in Gulf War I, and an estimated 1,000 metric tons were used in Gulf War II, where it remains in the environment with a radioactive half-life of 4.5 billion years;

Whereas our Gulf War veterans and many residents of Iraq have reported health-related problems, including increased rates of cancers and birth deformities in their children;

Whereas DU exposures have occurred in United States factories producing DU munitions, in the communities surrounding them, and at firing ranges where DU weapons are tested;

Whereas no comprehensive studies of the deleterious health effects of DU on veterans and other affected groups have yet been carried out; and

Whereas United States Representative Jim McDermott, a physician, has recently introduced H.R. 1483, the Depleted Uranium Munitions Study Act of 2003, which if passed by Congress, would mandate studies of health effects and of environmental contamination and cleanup;

Therefore be it resolved that the 2003 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association endorses the Depleted Uranium Munitions Study Act and urges all member congregations to do likewise.

Be it further resolved that the 2003 General Assembly requests that the Unitarian Universalist Association communicate the Assembly's endorsement of the bill to the media and to all members of the United States Congress and that member congregations that endorse the bill communicate their support to their Congressional representatives.

Global HIV/AIDS

Whereas our Unitarian Universalist Principles call us to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person and to promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;

Whereas HIV/AIDS is one of the most devastating crises in the history of public health, causing 25 million deaths and now infecting over 40 million men, women, and children, and if present trends continue, 40 million African children will have become orphans by the year 2010;

Whereas although there is still no cure for HIV/AIDS, the disease is preventable and treatable;

Whereas President Bush has promised \$3 billion per year over five years to fight global AIDS but has requested only \$1.7 billion for 2004 and many experts believe that even \$3 billion is inadequate to address the need; and

Whereas the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis is recognized for its expertise and credibility in fairly and efficiently allocating funds;

Be it therefore resolved that the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, brings to bear our values on the matter of the global AIDS pandemic and takes a leading role in promoting a stronger and more effective American response by

- ensuring that our liberal religious voice is heard through political advocacy at all levels of decision-making related to the global AIDS crisis;
- raising awareness of the role of pervasive human rights violations in contributing to higher rates of HIV/AIDS infection among women and girls;
- calling attention to restrictive amendments to effective protection programs; and
- providing leadership and resources to local congregations as they take on the mission of educating their members and their local communities about the scope of the pandemic, and urging congregations to action at a grassroots level; and

We call on Congress to follow through immediately on the amounts promised in the recent legislation by

- appropriating the full \$3 billion per year for five years for HIV/AIDS efforts abroad, and
- earmarking at least \$1 billion of the money appropriated for 2004 for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria; and

We also call on the President to require the United States Trade Representative to negotiate policies that facilitate unrestricted access to low-cost generic drugs in impoverished African countries where such pharmaceuticals are not manufactured; and

We also call on the Administration to recognize that the ideologically motivated restrictions in the recently enacted “U.S. Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003” (H.R. 1298) could subvert the President’s goal of preventing 7 million HIV infections, and to direct funds to programs that rely on the best medical practices, as determined by the World Health Organization, and have the greatest potential for effectiveness.

Public Hearings on Iraq

Whereas the Bush administration has presented distorted and incomplete evidence to the American people, Congress, and the United Nations regarding the national security threat posed by Iraq;

Whereas this evidence included forged documents alleging an attempt by Iraq to purchase uranium in Niger and Secretary of State Colin Powell’s presentation to the United Nations on Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction” that was used to justify military action;

Whereas recent information in the media reveals that the current United States Administration subverted the analysis and presentation of intelligence on Iraq, resulting in distorted and incomplete evidence about the threat Iraq presented to the United States;

Whereas questions surrounding the reliability of our intelligence on Iraq may make it difficult for other nations to support future actions to confront terror;

Whereas the United States Senate Intelligence Committee is currently holding “closed-door” hearings to examine the accuracy and integrity of intelligence information used to justify the attack on Iraq; and

Whereas public access to information and governmental disclosure of procedure and policy is critical to the survival of our democracy and to the credibility of our moral and political influence abroad;

Therefore the 2003 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls upon the United States Congress to conduct open bi-partisan hearings to examine the moral and legal justification for the invasion of Iraq. As Unitarian Universalists committed to the search for truth and the integrity of the democratic process, we call for this immediate action.

Women’s Rights

Whereas our Unitarian Universalist Principles call upon us to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person and to seek justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; and

Whereas in the past four decades the Unitarian Universalist Association and its member congregations have consistently spoken and acted in support of the broad spectrum of women’s rights, including women’s right to control their own bodies, receive equal pay for comparable work, and be safe from domestic violence;

Whereas on June 4, 2003, the House passed a federal ban on so-called “partial-birth abortion,” the Senate has approved a similar ban, and President Bush has promised to sign the new version of the bill; and

Whereas this is only the latest effort in the Bush Administration’s attempts to erode gains women have made in recent decades, attempts which include

- appointing people hostile to feminism to federal courts and other key positions affording the power to affect women’s lives,
- using federal dollars to promote marriage rather than job training for poor women,
- tacking abstinence-only-until-marriage sexuality education onto obscure bills,
- withdrawing funding of women’s offices in federal agencies in the name of budget cutting, and
- attempting to circumvent existing legislation, such as the proposal to amend guidelines to Title IX (which mandates equity for women in all educational programs, not just sports) to allow "a reasonable variance" from the standard of true equity for women;

Therefore be it resolved that congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association be encouraged to

- hold public forums about federal court appointments to inform us about the federal judicial appointment process and what those appointments may mean for women’s rights;
- contribute to the Unitarian Universalist Women’s Federation Clara Barton Internship for Women’s Rights, which will help keep Unitarian Universalists informed on these issues; and
- participate in the March for Reproductive Freedom planned for April 25, 2004, in Washington, DC; and

Be it further resolved that the UUA Washington Office for Advocacy be encouraged to keep congregations informed on judicial nominees and their records on women’s rights, so that Unitarian Universalists may share concerns with their elected officials.

CREDENTIALS REPORT

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

Accredited and attending the 42nd General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association were 2391 member delegates, 529 ministerial delegates, 5 associate member delegates, 23 members of the Board of Trustees (not included as registered delegates from congregations) for a total of 2948 delegates representing 687 congregations, 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Mexico, France and 4 Canadian provinces. Total registration for the Assembly was 7515, including 651 youth and 145 children.

CLOSING

The Assembly then voted to adjourn *sine die*.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Kathleen Montgomery
Recording Secretary