

MINUTES

FORTY EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION HELD IN SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

The General Assembly was convened on Wednesday, June 24, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. by Moderator Gini Courter at the Salt Palace in Salt Lake City, Utah.

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: Foothills Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Maryville, Tennessee; The Unitarian Universalists of Central Delaware in Dover, Dover, Delaware; and the New Hope Congregation, New Hudson, Michigan.

The Assembly received written, and in some cases oral, reports from the President, the Moderator, the Executive Vice President, the Treasurer, the Financial Advisor, the Secretary, the Board of Trustees, Beacon Press, the General Assembly Planning Committee, the Commission on Appraisal, the Commission on Social Witness, the Nominating Committee, the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office, 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 2009 Award for Distinguished Service to the Cause of Unitarian Universalism to the Rev. Alice B. Wesley.

Action on Bylaw and Rule Amendments

Following a review and study process by the Commission on Appraisal pursuant to Bylaw Section C-15.1(c)(4), a proposal to amend Article II of the bylaws failed to receive a majority vote for first-year, preliminary approval.

UUA Statement of Conscience

A proposed Statement of Conscience on Peacemaking was referred to the Commission on Social Witness for another year of study.

Actions of Immediate Witness

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

Advocate Pending Legislation Toward Clean, Honest, and Fair Elections in the United States

As we support the struggles of the Iranian people to have their voices heard and their votes counted, we must ensure the same for voters in the United States, so we can elect leaders who work for the good of all people and who strive for peace and justice in the United States of America and around the world.

Two bills before Congress in June 2009 will help move our nation to clean, honest, and fair elections in the U.S. and curb spending on campaigns: HR 2894, the Holt “Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2009,” and HR 1826 and S 751-752, the Fair Elections Now Act (FENA).” See www.thomas.loc.gov for the complete text of both bills and www.uuvv.org for additional information.

AIWs for earlier versions of these bills were endorsed at UUA General Assemblies in 1998, 2000, and 2004. This is the first year that the updated versions of the bills have a chance of being passed into law.

Unitarian Universalists around the country could make a significant contribution to the success of this needed election reform legislation. There are currently 77 cosponsors of the “Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2009,” and 55 cosponsors of the “Fair Elections Now Act.” We need many more cosponsors of both bills to ensure timely passage.

Our support for HR 2894 (the Holt bill) includes advocacy for the following changes to strengthen the bill:

1. Eliminate the vendor-driven requirement to replace all existing ballot-marking devices.
2. Ban all communications capabilities to prevent tampering.
3. Require poll-site tallies to be publicly posted at the polls immediately at the close of polls.
4. Mandate rigorous Congressional oversight of the Election Assistance Commission.
5. Prohibit vendor participation in the development of technical guidelines.
6. Mandate unconditional public disclosure of all voting system software and voter registration software.
7. Exempt mechanical devices in which counting mechanisms are clearly visible, such as lever machines.
8. Require jurisdictions to facilitate public observation of the entire chain of custody of the ballots and of all audit, tabulation and recount procedures.
9. Require audits to include evaluations of continuous citizen oversight of the chain of custody and all tabulation and recount procedures.

With hope that these concerns can be addressed, we endorse passage of the Holt bill THIS YEAR because the key elements we support will provide critically needed reform of our federal election systems before the 2010 elections.

Because use of the democratic process is a cherished fundamental principle of Unitarian Universalism, the 2009 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association urges

1. Individual Unitarian Universalists in the United States to communicate our support for these bills and advocate these improvements to HR 2894 by contacting their U.S. Representatives and Senators to support, and in particular co-sponsor, HR 2894, HR 1826, and S 751-752.
2. Unitarian Universalist congregations in the United States to encourage their members to take this action on behalf of democracy in this country.

3. The Unitarian Universalist Association Washington Office for Advocacy to keep congregations informed on the progress of these two bills for clean and verified elections in the United States.

U.S. Ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)

BECAUSE Unitarian Universalism affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every person, respect for the interdependent web of existence, and the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all, values which would be flagrantly violated by the massive killing of civilians by the lasting harm to the global environment, which would result from any use of nuclear weapons; and

WHEREAS the UUA has, beginning as early as 1961 and as recently as 1985, repeatedly expressed its support for the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons, and for the prohibition of nuclear testing as a step toward that goal; and

WHEREAS on September 24, 1996, the United States was the first nation to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), but the U.S. Senate has failed to give its advice and consent to ratification of the CTBT; and

WHEREAS it now appears likely that the U.S. Senate will vote later this year, or early in 2010, on ratification of the CTBT; and

WHEREAS ratification of the CTBT would represent a major step toward the reduction, and ultimate elimination, of nuclear weapons, would constrain nuclear-armed states from perfecting new and more sophisticated warheads, and would inhibit non-nuclear states from developing nuclear weapons capability; and

WHEREAS rejection of the CTBT by the Senate would seriously undermine further efforts at nuclear arms control, and would increase the danger of further nuclear proliferation; and

WHEREAS the CTBT has already been ratified by 148 countries, including all of the other members of NATO, and has been endorsed by a large majority of former U.S. Secretaries of State, Secretaries of Defense, and National Security Advisors, and has been described by the International Atomic Energy Agency as “crucial” to the future of nuclear arms control; and

WHEREAS, studies by the National Academy of Sciences and other expert bodies have established that the CTBT is reliably verifiable, and that nuclear testing is not necessary to ensure the safety and reliability of the existing nuclear arsenal,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2009 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls upon UUA congregations and their members to ask their United States Senators to give advice and consent to ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and reaffirms its support for the definitive cessation of nuclear weapons testing.

In Support of America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act

BECAUSE Unitarian Universalists respect the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part; and BECAUSE the Unitarian Universalist Association is holding its 2009 General Assembly in Utah, home to the largest intact and most pristine wild land region in the lower 48 states; and

WHEREAS the publicly owned wild lands of Utah, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), belong to all Americans and all future generations; and

WHEREAS these wild lands are world renowned for their spectacular beauty and majesty, with serpentine slickrock canyons, soaring sandstone cliffs, arches, bridges, mesas, mountains, rivers, and desert streams; and WHEREAS these wild lands provide home to endangered or sensitive wildlife, including desert bighorn sheep, cougar, and endangered desert tortoise, and habitat for elk, deer, bear, and many other animals;

WHEREAS these wild lands contain some of the world's richest concentrations of prehistoric ruins, including cliff dwellings, rock art, and 10,000-year-old cave sites; and

WHEREAS these wild lands possess nationally significant scientific, biological, geologic and paleontological value, including threatened and endangered plant species; geologic formations displaying 2.5 billion years of Earth's history; and fossilized remains; and

WHEREAS these lands are treasured by people around the world for their exceptional wilderness recreation opportunities; and

WHEREAS these lands are deeply valued by people from many different spiritual traditions as places of inspiration, connection, renewal and solace; and

WHEREAS we acknowledge that we have not been in right relationships with relevant indigenous peoples and institutions with respect to this AIW, yet some indigenous people have expressed support for this legislative effort, and we affirm the need to create and maintain these relationships and to listen and actively respond to indigenous guidance concerning these lands; and

WHEREAS BLM's 2008 plans dictating management of these lands over the next two decades fail to protect their wilderness value, pristine character, and ecological health, leaving significant areas vulnerable to oil and gas drilling, rampant off-road vehicle use, climate change, and other harmful activities; and

WHEREAS the best defense against the effects of global warming (drier conditions, wildfires, diminished water resources, spread of non-native invasive plants, and dust storms) on Utah's public lands is to minimize ground disturbance; and

WHEREAS America's Red Rock Wilderness Act would protect over 9 million acres of BLM managed Utah public lands; and

WHEREAS America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, re-introduced into the 111th Congress with hearings likely this fall, is supported by the Utah Wilderness Coalition's more than 250 national and regional conservation groups, and is fully field-checked and documented,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 2009 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association urges congregations and their members to:

- call for passage of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act (S 799/HR 1925), or other legislation, to protect Utah's spectacular and irreplaceable wild lands by writing or visiting their senators and representatives seeking their support;
- call for the Department of the Interior, through the BLM, to establish administrative protections for Utah's wild lands from off-road vehicle abuse, road development, oil, gas, oil shale, and tar sands development by participating in the BLM public comment process (www.blm.gov); and
- use the resources of the Utah Wilderness Coalition (www.uwcoalition.org) to educate themselves and others about the environmental and spiritual importance of protecting Utah's wild lands.

Support Bolivian UUs Struggling for Justice and Human Rights

BECAUSE Bolivian Olga Flores Bedregal, who helped found a UU congregation in La Paz, had a brother, Carlos Flores Bedregal, who disappeared at the hands of the military dictatorship in 1980; and

BECAUSE for the past 29 years Olga has petitioned the government for information on her brother's whereabouts and protested this human rights violation to all three branches of the Bolivian government: the administrative, the legislative, and the judicial, exhausting all of her legal remedies with them to no effect; and

BECAUSE in 2006, Olga successfully won a case before the Organization of American States' Human Rights Commission, calling upon the Bolivian government to redress this violation, which the government continued to ignore; and

BECAUSE Olga undertook a hunger strike on April 26, 2009, which lasted for over 30 days; and

BECAUSE Olga had attended the International Convocation of UU Women in Houston in February 2009 and met many women from around the world who became inspired to write letters to the Bolivian government, international tribunals, and news agencies begging that the Bolivian Government accede to Olga's request for redress and to end her dangerous protest; and

BECAUSE this UU woman's brave campaign caused the Bolivian Legislature to pass a Resolution in early June 2009 that called for military archives to be opened; and

BECAUSE, although Olga found this victory to be incomplete, counsel from UUs in the ICUUW online community around the world, who promised to stand in solidarity with her, finally caused Olga to end her hunger strike on June 12, 2009; and

BECAUSE Olga is no longer isolated and her cause is now moving toward a positive resolution in her journey toward justice and human rights; and a Resolution is not binding, nor guarantees answers or justice—it must be reinforced; and unless UUs increase our support through action, the Bolivian government—a fragile democracy—may bow to the wishes of a recalcitrant military and allow the Resolution to die; and Bolivian law, specifically the Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons Act, and Law No. 2640, which requires compensation to victims of political violence during the military regimes, could be ignored; and information, return of remains, and justice could still be denied to Olga and her compatriots; and

WHEREAS opportunity exists because the indigenous President Evo Morales values his good standing in the world court of public opinion; and

WHEREAS momentum now exists that reinforces our faith that collectively we can move towards justice, using this case as an exemplar of past and continuing disappearances and abuses; and

WHEREAS our values and beliefs in truth, justice, dignity, and human worth demand our attention and immediate action,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that those in attendance at this General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association write to the Bolivian Ambassador to the United States (Ambassador Gustavo Guzman Saldana, Bolivian Embassy, 3014 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC, 20008; phone: (202) 232-4827 / 28; fax: (202) 232-8017; email: www.bolivia-usa.org) urging the Bolivian government, pursuant to its Resolution, and the InterAmerican Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons Act and Law No. 2640 to structure a Truth Commission to investigate, clarify, and adjudicate all suspected human rights violations.

U.S.-Sponsored Torture: A Call for a Commission of Inquiry

BECAUSE one of our core Principles as Unitarian Universalists is our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of all persons; and

WHEREAS torture violates the basic dignity of the human person, degrades everyone involved—from policy-makers to perpetrators to victims—and contradicts our nation’s most cherished values; and

WHEREAS according to the Geneva Convention on torture and other international treaties to which the United States is a signatory, torture is illegal; and

WHEREAS torture is inherently wrong and immoral, because it is designed to break the human soul and the human body; and

WHEREAS reliable evidence available to the public has shown that the U.S. has engaged in torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment in response to the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001; and

WHEREAS a report produced by the International Committee of the Red Cross and made known to the public in February 2009 concluded: “[T]he ill-treatment to which [detainees] were subjected while held in the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency of the United States] program, either singly or in combination, constituted torture”; and

WHEREAS the full story on the scope, breadth, and depth of U.S.-sponsored torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment has yet to be fully revealed; and

WHEREAS public awareness, acknowledgement, and understanding of what the U.S. has done with respect to the use of torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment are necessary in order to make sure that our nation never again engages in this conduct,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association endorses the following statement of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture:

U.S.-sponsored Torture Now: A Call for a Commission of Inquiry

The United States must never again engage in torture. Torture is immoral, illegal, and counterproductive. It causes profound and lasting harm, especially to its victims but also to its perpetrators. It contradicts our nation’s deepest values and corrupts the moral fabric of our society.

We call for an impartial, nonpartisan, and independent Commission of Inquiry. Its purpose should be to gather all the facts and make recommendations. It should ascertain the extent to which our interrogation practices have constituted torture and "cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment." Understanding the causes, nature and scope

of U.S.-sponsored torture is essential for preventing it in the future and eliminating it from our system without loopholes. U.S. law will determine the extent of any criminal culpability.

As people of faith, we know that brokenness can be healed—both in individual lives and in the life of the nation. All religions believe that redemption is possible. Learning the truth can set us on a path toward national healing and renewal.

The United States must never again allow itself to be driven by blinding fears and bitter resentments in responding to national tragedy. The use of torture only serves to undermine our security in a dangerous world.

Nothing less than the soul of our nation is at stake in confronting U.S.-sponsored torture and completely renouncing its use. Let the U.S. reaffirm its values by establishing a Commission of Inquiry.

Oppose Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity-Based Violence in Iraq

WHEREAS the first and sixth Unitarian Universalist Principles affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person and the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all, and the United Nations Charter reflects these values in its commitment to promote peace, prosperity, and dignity for all people; and

WHEREAS the Yogyakarta Principles apply international human rights law to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) and reflect UU values; and

WHEREAS the responsibility to protect has not been implemented in areas such as Iraq, where over 400 known LGBT people have already been murdered since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq began, and on a daily basis people face human rights violations based on real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity which are perpetrated with impunity; and

WHEREAS the United States is now a member of the UN Human Rights Council, which is holding its Universal Periodic Review of the human rights record of Iraq in February 2010, and Secretary of State Clinton has committed to advancing a comprehensive human rights agenda that includes the elimination of violence and discrimination against people based on SOGI; and

WHEREAS under the Obama administration, the United States supports the UN General Assembly Joint Statement on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Human Rights; and

WHEREAS UUs are previously committed to ending the war and occupation in Iraq in the interest of peace and human rights,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2009 General Assembly of

the Unitarian Universalist Association commit to raising awareness in their communities and pressuring the United States government to take a collaborative leadership role with the United Nations in protecting human rights for people in Iraq who are targeted because of their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the delegates urge:

- individual UUs to make efforts to raise awareness about the issue of human rights violations based on real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity in Iraq;
- the Unitarian Universalist Association, as the national organization representing the collective voice of American UUs, to direct a letter to President Obama and to Secretary of State Clinton expressing concern about these human rights violations;
- congregations to pressure leadership in the U.S. government to raise these issues of human rights violations at the United Nations and to be sure that those efforts are not limited only to activities at the United Nations but shall be integrated into United States foreign non-military policy; and
- congregations to engage in advocacy, including but not limited to organizing teach-ins, study groups, petitions, visiting congressional representatives, and inviting guest speakers about this issue, and also contacting Secretary of State Clinton and UN Ambassador Rice, imploring them to make sure that the United States is present at Iraq's February 2010 Universal Periodic Review in order to voice concerns about these human rights violations.

This AIW should not be construed to authorize support for any military action by the United States or any additional delay of U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.

Responsive Resolutions

Five resolutions in response to the reports of officers were passed by a vote of two-thirds or more. They are:

Responsive Resolution on Article II

The 2009 General Assembly of the UUA strongly urges the UUA Board of Trustees to facilitate a continuation and further deepening of the discussion of the Principles and Purposes begun by the review conducted by the UUA Commission on Appraisal, and that such discussion should continue throughout all levels of the Association, at least until such time as further revisions to Article II may be presented to a General Assembly.

Responsive Resolution on Article XV

WHEREAS the Commission on Appraisal submitted a proposal to amend Article II after a period of study and review as allowed by Article XV section C-15.1.(c)(4), a process begun in 2006, while Article XV C-15.1. (c)(3) prevents such a proposal from being amended, and

WHEREAS there was an apparent confusion around the application of Article XV section C-15.1 (c), all sub-sections, during the Plenary of the 2009 General Assembly,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 2009 General Assembly submits to the Board of Trustees a review of the entirety of Section C-15.1 (c) in order to clarify the process and limitations of a proposal to amend a bylaw in Article II.

Responsive Resolutions on Inclusion

In response to the changes to Article II reported by the Commission on Appraisal and subsequent discussion of those recommendations at this General Assembly, the delegates request that the UUA Board of Trustees place a motion to substitute the recommended language of Section C-2.4 “Inclusion” for the current bylaw C-2.3 “Non-discrimination” on a General Assembly agenda as soon as possible.

The Commission on Appraisal report on Article II of the UUA Bylaws includes section C-2.4 entitled “Inclusion.” This section calls us to do all we can to replace barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. This section also expresses a covenant among our congregations to strive to truly welcome all persons and commit to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone’s participation.

In response to this section of the Commission’s report, be it resolved that:

1. the delegates at this General Assembly are urged to act upon the pledge and covenant expressed in proposed Section C-2.4; and further that
2. the congregations represented here report to the UUA Board of Trustees before the 2010 General Assembly on their actions in response to this charge.

Responsive Resolution on Barriers to Inclusion in Outreach to African UU and Other Progressive Religious Congregations

WHEREAS the Opening Worship at the 2009 GA reported on President Sinkford’s Pilgrimage to Africa and celebrated a new outreach to African UU congregations, as represented by 3 male Africans from UU congregations in Africa; and

WHEREAS the International Convocation for UU Women, held early in 2009 in Houston, Texas, invited and funded scholarships for 8 women leaders from Africa to attend the conference, and despite heroic efforts, none successfully obtained visas to attend the Conference; and

WHEREAS—although it can be argued that visa requirements are complex and depend on individual circumstances of each person—these results raise questions about the justice of the U.S. system of granting visas and possible gender bias; and

WHEREAS the response given for denial of visas to the women was in some cases lack of bank account and/or assets, which more often affects women in Africa than men,

THEREFORE this resolution asks the appropriate UU body to contact the office for women's advocacy or other appropriate staff in the State Department and/or the Office of the Presidency of the United States and urge consideration of two actions:

- a) an inquiry into the reasons for denial of visas for these female leaders for access to the U.S. for attendance at a UU religious conference; and
- b) consideration of the longer term issue of whether the criteria for granting visas for such religious and/or broader educational events needs to be reviewed, to prevent in the future such apparent unequal access.

Credentials Report

The final credentials report of the Secretary of the Association was as follows: accredited and attending the 48th General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association were 1545 member delegates, 416 ministerial delegates, 3 credentialed religious educators, 4 associate member delegates, 23 members of the Board of Trustees (not included as registered delegates from congregations), and 17 delegates representing the Church of the Larger Fellowship (included in member delegate count) for a total of 1991 delegates representing 582 congregations, 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and 3 Canadian provinces. Total registration for the Assembly was 3385, including 145 youth.

Other Business

Attached as an appendix hereto (Attachment A) is the report of the Secretary containing the results of the election held pursuant to Bylaw sections 5.2, 6.4, 8.3, and 9.10.

Closing

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

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Kathleen Montgomery
Recording Secretary

President	Onsite	Absentee	Totals
Hallman	654	827	1481
Morales	1041	1020	2061
Blank / Spoiled	1	7	8

Board of Review			
Wooden	1458	1303	2761
Claire	1458	1284	2742
Blank / Spoiled	172	485	657

Youth Trustee			
Allen	1524	1335	2859
Blank / Spoiled	172	519	691

Financial Advisor			
Brody	1535	1337	2872
Blank / Spoiled	161	517	678

Nominating Committee 4 Year			
Hobart	1518	1331	2849
Blank / Spoiled	178	523	701

Nominating Committee 6 Year			
Spencer	1479	1323	2802
Jackson	1446	1264	2710
Manning	1441	1232	2673
Blank / Spoiled	169	503	672

Board of Trustees At Large			
King	1458	1286	2744
Pupke	1457	1300	2757
Blank / Spoiled	174	496	670

Commission On Appraisal			
Kratochvil	1459	1307	2766
Dowdell	1450	1277	2727
Baron	1424	1282	2706
Blank / Spoiled	188	502	690

Commission On Social

Witness

May	1433	1286	2719
Starr	1465	1301	2766
Blank / Spoiled	201	521	722

Moderator	Onsite	Absentee	Totals
Courter	1599	1419	3018
Blank / Spoiled	97	435	532

GA Planning Committee

Frost	1419	1276	2695
Wieder	1441	1289	2730
Bluestein	1444	1278	2722
Atlas	1427	1263	2690
Blank / Spoiled	188	510	698