



It happened at Syracuse



A 50th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE:
Celebrating the Birth and Growth of Unitarian Universalism
October 30-31, 2009, Syracuse, NY

<http://www.sld.uua.org/50thAnniversary/50thanniversary.html>

This conference will be a celebration of our history with a focus on the events surrounding the “1959 Conference at Syracuse” when delegates from the American Unitarian Association (AUA) and the Universalist Church of America (UCA) adopted the “Plan for Consolidation” that resulted in creation of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). The conference will also be a quest to advance our future by examining the development of Unitarian Universalism in the past fifty years. In general sessions, workshops, and worship four questions will guide our quest:

- 1) Where did we come from?
- 2) What has happened to the Unitarian Universalist movement since the Conference at Syracuse?
- 3) What do our principles, purposes and practices say about our identity?
- 4) What is our future?

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Friday, October 30, 2009: Opening Ceremonies at the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse

5:00-7:00 Registration and in-gathering

6:00-7:00 Dinner

7:15-7:30 Opening Remarks: Tom Chulak & Elizabeth Strong

7:30-7:45 Music from the period sung by the choirs of Central New York UU congregations

7:45-8:45 Telling the Story: “What Happened at Syracuse?” David Parke will present a narrative about events leading up to consolidation that establishes a framework for understanding the historical and theological dynamic of the “1959 Conference at Syracuse” and what this means for us today.

8:45-9:00 Closing Remarks: Elizabeth Strong

Saturday, October 31, 2009: Grand Ballroom at the Hotel Syracuse

9:00-10:00 Opening program: “The Past 50 years” David Bumbaugh will explore historical and theological developments in the fifty years since consolidation and will discuss the task before us as a people of faith if we are to fulfill our promise to meaningfully address the needs of the world.

10:15- 11:15 Morning round of workshops (see page 2 for a description of workshops)

11:30-12:30 Worship Service: “It Was Just Before Noon...” Dick Gilbert will lead us in worship in the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Syracuse. This is the same place where it was dramatically announced “Just Before Noon” 50 years earlier that the last obstacle to adopting the “Plan for Consolidation” had been removed and the final vote was taken; thereby setting in motion the process that led to creation of the UUA on May 12, 1961.

12:45-1:45 Lunch

2:00-3:00 Afternoon round of workshops (see page 2 for a description of workshops)

3:15-4:00 Concluding discussion: Elizabeth Strong will lead us in a general session that will hold aloft the idea of the congregation as an educational community to engage us in reflection on what was learned during the conference that may direct our action in advancing the UU movement.

Sunday, November 1, 2009: Those from out of town who are staying over Saturday night are invited to attend Sunday worship at May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse (10:30 AM)



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WORKSHOP DETAILS

Saturday's program will include four workshops that will be repeated in the morning (10:15-11:15) and afternoon (2:00 -3:00) to provide some choice among a range of topics, while also maximizing the opportunity for participants to have a shared experience in a collective quest to learn from our history as we address the challenges that face us.

Workshop 1) Weaving a Tapestry of Our Faith: A Theological Dialogue: David Parke and David Bumbaugh will engage participants in a Christian UU/Humanist UU dialogue. This will not be a rehash of the old theism/humanism or spirituality/rationality debate. It will be an honest attempt to take up a task that was avoided during consolidation for the sake of methodological and strategic expediency. That task is to weave a coherent future out of our diverse theological threads. This should be a compelling conversation that addresses theological issues Unitarian Universalist too often shy away from, but that must be better resolved in the quest to reconstruct our faith tradition in response to contemporary challenges.

Workshop 2) And Thy Neighbor as Thyself: The Universalist Imperative: Dick Gilbert will lead a discussion of "And Thy Neighbor as Thyself: The Universalist Imperative," a paper that presents Universalism as both a theological position and an ethical imperative. Dick is a "born Universalist" who has enthusiastically spent over four decades engaging Unitarian Universalist in considering and acting on the prophetic imperative that lies at the core of our faith. He will help us consider how Universalism has captured the imagination of 21st century Unitarian Universalists with its theological inclusiveness and its ethical clarity.

Workshop 3) We are a Religion of Lifelong Learning Communities: Liz Strong will conduct a workshop on lifespan faith development. This workshop will highlight the leading role Unitarian and Universalist religious education played in the period leading up to consolidation, examine key developments in Unitarian Universalist religious education in the last 50 years, and explore the role of lifespan faith development in advancing the future of the Unitarian Universalist movement as a religious people with something to offer the world.

Workshop 4) A Tale of Two Congregations: Ton Chulak will facilitate an exploration of the histories of May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse and First Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse as a metaphor for the development of the Unitarian Universalist movement. At the time of consolidation May Memorial was a Unitarian congregation with a pronounced humanist orientation and its delegates to the conference were strong proponents of consolidation. First UU was a congregation with a distinguished Universalist history. Its minister at the time of consolidation, Ellsworth Reamon, a past president of the UCA and of the state Convention of Universalists in both Michigan and New York, was a leading voice against merger. This workshop will include members of both congregations presenting material and should be an exciting opportunity to learn about (and from) the parallel journeys of two of our oldest congregations.

Workshops are also being planned for children and youth to provide an opportunity for them to explore our liberal religious heritage and the development of Unitarian Universalism. Additional workshops may be added contingent upon the level of registration, which is limited to 200 participants

To download the registration brochure and read more about "What happened at Syracuse" go to the conference website at:

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