

**ST. LAWRENCE DISTRICT UUA
MINUTES OF THE 45TH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
Saturday, April 26, 2008**

1. WELCOME

The District President, Ernie Hall, welcomed all those assembled to the 45th Annual Assembly.

2. REPORT OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

The District Vice President, Karen Palmer, announced that the following were present at this Annual Assembly: 42 delegates, 8 ministers, and 8 Board members, representing 16 Congregations. A quorum was present at the Assembly.

3. ROLL CALL

The District Secretary, Nancy Reed, read the names of all St. Lawrence District UU congregations. Representatives of those individual congregations who were present were recognized.

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: That the printed agenda be adopted. Duly seconded and approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 2007 MEETING

Motion: That the minutes of the 2007 District Assembly be approved. Duly seconded and approved.

5. STATE OF THE DISTRICT

President Ernie Hall and Rev. Thomas Chulak, District Executive, gave a grief review of the state of the District. Ernie discussed the Board's goals for this past year. He also gave a description of how the district is structured.

Primary district staff, consultants, coordinators and the Board were named and recognized.

Tom thanked them for their work. He talked about "shared visionary leadership" being the key to growing Unitarian Universalism in our region. **(Attachment #1)**

6. GROWTH COMMITTEE PRESENTATION: LIGHTING THE CHALICE

Eileen Hamlin, chair of the Growth Committee, acknowledged the congregations that received Chalice Lighter funds this year. The following congregations made presentations highlighting the positive results of this funding: The Unitarian Universalist Church of Cortland (Ministry Intern Barbara Bloom); and The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Saratoga Springs (Rev. Linda Hoddy).

Eileen then announced that the Chalice Lighters program has awarded grants to the Unitarian Church of Barneveld and to All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church of Watertown to help with the costs of improving accessibility to these two churches.

7. TREASURER'S REPORT

The District Treasurer, Roger Thielking, described the state of the District finances. His report is on file in the District Office. Roger will be stepping down as Treasurer at the end of this fiscal year.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2008 – 2009 BUDGET

President Ernie Hall discussed the proposed budget.

Motion: That the St. Lawrence District budget as presented be approved.
Motion Approved.

8. ANNUAL PROGRAM FUND

Annual Program Fund Representative, Suzanne McNamara, discussed the "One Ask" initiative. That is, that District churches received a single request this year which combined District and UUA Program Fund dues. Suzanne also reported that the money that the UUA raised on Association Sunday this year went to pay for a major advertising campaign about Unitarian Universalism in national magazines.

9. ELECTIONS AND INSTALLATION

Al DeSalvo, Chair of the Nominating Committee, announced the nominations of the following people for three-year terms on the District Board:

- ** Ernie Hall, First Unitarian Society of Schenectady
- ** Bill Parke, Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo

AND, the nomination to the Board for one year of:

- ** Rev. Frances Manly, Ministerial Representative
- ** Taylor Longo, Youth Trustee (Nominated by the Youth Adult Committee)

Al also announced the candidates for three-year terms on the District Nominating Committee:

- ** Debby Herman, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Binghamton
- ** Dave Munro, First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany

Motion: That the report of the Nominating Committee and Youth Adult Committee be received and that the recommended slate of candidates be elected. Duly seconded and approved.

Therefore, the newly elected Board of Trustee members are:

- ** Ernie Hall
- ** Bill Parke
- ** Frances Manly
- ** Taylor Longo

And the new Nominating Committee members are:

- ** Debby Herman
- ** Dave Munro

10. NEW BUSINESS

Debby Herman, Program Consultant for Lifespan Faith Development, discussed the proposed Safety Policy for District events. Debby reported that, due to some concerns about several parts of the new policy, the final approval has been postponed until next year's District Assembly. Congregations are encouraged to work with this policy in the coming year. Copies are available. Ernie thanked Debby for her work on this.

11. 2008 ANNUAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

President Ernie Hall announced that the next District Annual Assembly will be held in Albany, New York, on April 24th and 25th, 2009.

12. CONCLUSION: BRIDGING OUR YOUTH

Motion: To adjourn the business meeting. Duly seconded and approved.

The SLD District Bridging Ceremony followed to honor our youth as they transition to young adulthood and to celebrate their contribution to our District and Association.

Respectfully submitted,



Nancy Reed
St. Lawrence District Board Secretary

Attachment #1

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

April 2008

Ernie Hall

As the 2008 District Assembly approaches, I am nearing the end of my first year as President of the St. Lawrence District Board, and it is a great opportunity for reflection on those experiences and the state of the District. As many of you have heard me say throughout the year, my main goal has been to keep the Board focused on the District's mission of serving, connecting, and growing our congregations. I am also fond of relating these concepts to my own personal journey, and how this year of service (and indeed, any leadership experience) has allowed me to connect with others and grow as an individual. I have certainly experienced a deepening connection with many of the wonderful UUUs who make up our District, broadening my "circle of connection", and growing in this process. For these opportunities, I am deeply grateful.

In August 2007, at our yearly Board Retreat, we articulated four goals for this year: to further develop and strengthen our congregational clusters; to continue to improve and grow District Assembly; to work with the UUA to pioneer a "one-ask" model to strengthen and simplify congregational giving to SLD and the UUA; and to work with the Nominating Committee add diversity to SLD leadership. I'm pleased with the progress we have made on these goals. During this past year our clusters (regional groupings) of congregations have been particularly effective, due in part to the hard work of our Vice-President, Karen Palmer, and District Executive Tom Chulak. This year is the first in which we have a District Assembly Coordinator, Linda Friedman, on staff, and Linda has put together an outstanding program for DA 2008. Our APF Representative, Suzanne McNamara, has worked with Tom Chulak and the UUA to implement the "one-ask" campaign, and we are seeing growth in congregational contributions to both SLD and UUA. Finally, the Nominating Committee has worked hard to have a diverse leadership, but we need your help here. It is important that all who read this think about how you, too, could make your voice heard in the governance and polity of the District.

When I look back on the year, I also think of our primary staff members, and the changes that have taken place, or will take place, in these positions. In 2007-08, we were extremely fortunate to have our outstanding District Executive, Tom Chulak, back with us in a three-quarters-time position, after two years of sharing his services with the Ohio-Meadville District. I know that all of our congregations have benefited from Tom's presence this year. In his other quarter-time role, Tom has coordinated the New Regional Group, a four-district collaboration to share staff and resources. The NRG is already paying big dividends in our new leadership school UULTI, in programming for youth, young adults, and large churches, and in a planned new shared growth consultant position. Our second primary staff member is Program Consultant Debby Herman, who has worked 16 hours per week for us in her first full year in the PC role. Debbie has done a fantastic job in strengthening our congregational programs and staffing for children, youth, and young adults. As you know, Debbie has made the personal decision to step down from this position at the end of the fiscal year, and while we will miss her greatly,

we are pleased and excited to have hired Karen LoBracco, a credentialed religious educator, as our new PC in a half-time position with benefits. Finally, I wanted to express my extreme gratitude to Sue Tabone, our Administrative Secretary, who works for us 28 hours per week. Sue is truly the glue that holds the District together administratively. She is a wonderful, proactive administrator who is a joy to work with.

One reason that I am very proud of our District is that we are able to devote nearly all of our financial resources to providing services to our congregations. A key part of those services is our very strong group of consultants and coordinators to whom we pay a small stipend and from whom we get tremendous dedication and skill. These include Social Justice Coordinator Dick Gilbert, Fund-Raising & Small Church Ministerial Transition Coordinator Sara Clavez, Communications Coordinator Christy Multer, Planning Consultant Jeanne Crane, Young Adult and Campus Ministry Consultant Robbie Brydon, Youth Coordinator Jody Brown, District Reporter Ellen Asprooth, and Bookkeeper Patrick Roach. The accomplishments of this great group of professionals are too numerous to mention, but they reflect expertise in some of our key congregational needs: social justice, financial stewardship, communication, youth and young adults, planning, and ministerial transitions. The UUA also provides funding for a Ministerial Settlement Representative, Priscilla Richter, and a Compensation Consultant, Fred Boreali.

The final part of our District leadership structure is, of course, our Committees. These groups of volunteers work closely with our staff, consultants, and coordinators to provide District, cluster, and congregations programming aimed at areas such as growth, leadership development, religious education, social justice, and youth.

There are detailed reports from all of these individuals and groups in your Annual Meeting materials. I hope you will take the time to look through them. If you do, I think you will come away with the strong impression that our District, although small in members and congregations, is at the cutting edge of thinking about how to best help our congregations be successful and to be good stewards and evangelists of Unitarian Universalism in upstate New York and northern Pennsylvania.

Finally, my reflection on 2007-08 and the state of the District would not be complete without thanking and acknowledging the Board of Trustees, who have worked very hard and very cooperatively throughout the year. Each Board member has specific District and congregational responsibilities, and has brought their particular perspectives and gifts to the work we do together.

One of the great benefits of District service is that you get to “sample” the wonderful talents and personalities embodied in the ministers, leaders, and congregations in our District. After a year of being in this unique position, I feel truly enriched and blessed. I thank you again for this opportunity.

Ernie

DISTRICT EXECUTIVE REPORT

April 2008

Rev. Dr. Tom Chulak

Let me begin by thanking Ernie Hall for his wonderful leadership as the President of the St. Lawrence District. Our leadership team consisting of staff, board and committees have been working together in mostly joyous and effective ways to serve our congregations, to connect them to each other, the District and the UUA, and to help them grow.

In this report, I want to talk about the growth of our congregations. Let me begin by acknowledging that numerical growth is not the heart of the matter. But my experience has taught me that it is one indicator of health and vitality in the congregation.

And what makes for health and vitality? Congregations which are open and responsive and serving not only the members but the larger community. It involves relationships that are trusting and loving with programs that connect at the deepest levels. Finally it involves shared visionary leadership that is grounded in Unitarian Universalism. There is no substitute for leadership.

Of all the factors in congregational growth, I would point to shared visionary leadership as the key. Shared means that there is collaboration. Visionary means that there is something more we want to become. And leadership is what makes things happen. Sometimes we have shared leadership that is not visionary and visionary leadership that is not shared. These do not grow congregations.

The growth research shows that the single most important factor in congregations not growing is congregational conflict, which almost always involves conflict between leaders.

In the past five years, in spite of our efforts to serve and connect our congregations, we overall as a District have not grown. We are still about 5200 members. This fact is challenging to all of us who love our congregations and the District.

During this period of time, 16 congregations have grown, 4 have stayed the same and 14 have declined. One congregation in particular, First Unitarian in Rochester has grown by 114 members in this period. We as a District honored that congregation by nominating them for the UUA Pickett Award for Congregational Growth.

We can blame our non growth on the fact that the region encompassing the St. Lawrence District has not increased in population and that is true. But it runs deeper than that.

Here are some additional thoughts on why I believe we are collectively on a plateau.

First – we have too many conflicts between ministers and congregations. Wherever there have been conflicts congregations have declined. We can do better.

Second – Many of the structures and patterns in our congregations exist to maintain what has been not what could be. They are relatively non-adaptable or no growth oriented. We need to look for new ways for new days.

Third – congregations have not found common values, mission, vision and strategies that they will commit to with conviction and passion.

So what can we do?

- Select visionary leaders
- Build strong leadership teams
- Create bold visions and the will to implement
- Restructure to be effective
- Stay focused on relationships as the heart of the matter
- Ground your congregation in its story.

It is clear to me and the District Board that we can do better. So we have decided to establish a District Future Team headed by Dave Munro of Albany to look for new and better ways to serve, connect and grow our congregations. With your input and that from outside the District, we hope to bring a visionary plan back to you for the 2010 DA. As a start, our beginning vision is to create the beloved communities that are sustainable, theologically inclusive, multigenerational, multicultural, and justice oriented

I am proud of all we have accomplished as a District. Together we have made a difference. But there is more yet to do. Let us move into the future with creativity and courage.

Thank you very much for the honor of serving the St. Lawrence District.