

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Unitarian Universalist General Assembly Delegates Return to Silver Spring

(St. Louis, MO, June 25th, 2006) -- The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) concluded its annual General Assembly in St. Louis with a renewed commitment to witness on behalf of liberal religious values. The convention attracted 4,300 Unitarian Universalists from across the country for the annual event that includes business meetings, workshops and worship services in a national celebration of spiritual community. The UUA's formal positions are created through a bottom-up democratic process in which delegates from member congregations introduce and vote on measures at the Assembly.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring (UUCSS) sent two religious professionals and four voting delegates to the Assembly. Director of Religious Education, Mandy Keithan, said, "I come to General Assembly to be renewed in my faith. I leave filled with ideas about how to serve my local congregation and the national denomination." In workshops Keithan learned new techniques and gathered resources for teaching religious pluralism. Beginning in the fall, the Sunday school classes at UUCSS will focus for the year on world religions. "It's important for me to understand how to teach in a way that deeply honors a wide diversity of faiths," she explained.

The Assembly delegates adopted a Statement of Conscience on the "Threat of Global Warming." The statement culminates a two-year study process and commits Unitarian Universalists to promoting individual and collective actions to slow and ultimately reverse global warming. This religious commitment honors the seventh principle of Unitarian Universalism, a "respect for the interdependent web of existence." UUCSS member and Assembly delegate Jim Paoletti voted for the resolution. He explained, "I feel the threat is very real, and that we need to be conscious of it in everything we do. For our congregation, this means keep the resolution's goals in mind as we consider future renovations and extensions to our property."

Throughout the conference, ministers and guest speakers voiced the need for the progressive faith community to offer a powerful spiritual response to the religious right. In his formal report to the Assembly, UUA President William G. Sinkford celebrated the recent strides toward Marriage Equality, and he pledged “to continue to oppose the discriminatory, mean-spirited Federal Marriage Amendment every single time it is introduced.”

In protest of the most recently introduced Federal Marriage Amendment this past spring, Paoletti was responsible for hanging a banner on the UUCSS building that read “Marriage is a Civil Right.” Since 1997, the Silver Spring congregation has been a designated “Welcoming Congregation,” a UU church community that is actively welcoming and inclusive of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender people.

The Assembly delegates voted to issue several social justice resolutions known as “Actions of Immediate Witness.” Among other resolutions this year were calls to “Support Immigrant Justice,” “Pass the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act,” and “Stand up for the United Nations Human Rights Council.” Full texts of the resolutions will be available online shortly at www.uua.org/csw.

Keithan commented on how the Association’s social justice work springs from its religious mission: “As Unitarian Universalists, we are called to live out our spiritual principles by improving ourselves and the communities we live in, and by bringing justice more fully into the world.”

####

To learn more about the Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring, see the congregation’s website at <http://www.uucss.org>.

The Unitarian Universalist Association is a faith community of more than 1000 self-governing congregations that bring to the world a vision of religious freedom, tolerance and social justice. For more information on the UUA, including recent press releases and news articles, please visit the online pressroom at www.uua.org/pressroom.

Contacts:

Mandy Keithan
Director of Religious Education
Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring
301-434-4050
dre@uucss.org

Janet Hayes
UUA Information Officer
617-948-4386
jhayes@uua.org