

# Unitarians to unite in St. Louis

By American staff

The 2006 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association will be held in St. Louis from Wednesday, June 21 through Sunday, June 25. More than 4,000 Unitarian Universalists from across the country will gather at the America's Center in St. Louis to worship, celebrate and to take part in the democratic process that guides the work of the growing denomination comprised of over 1,000 congregations.

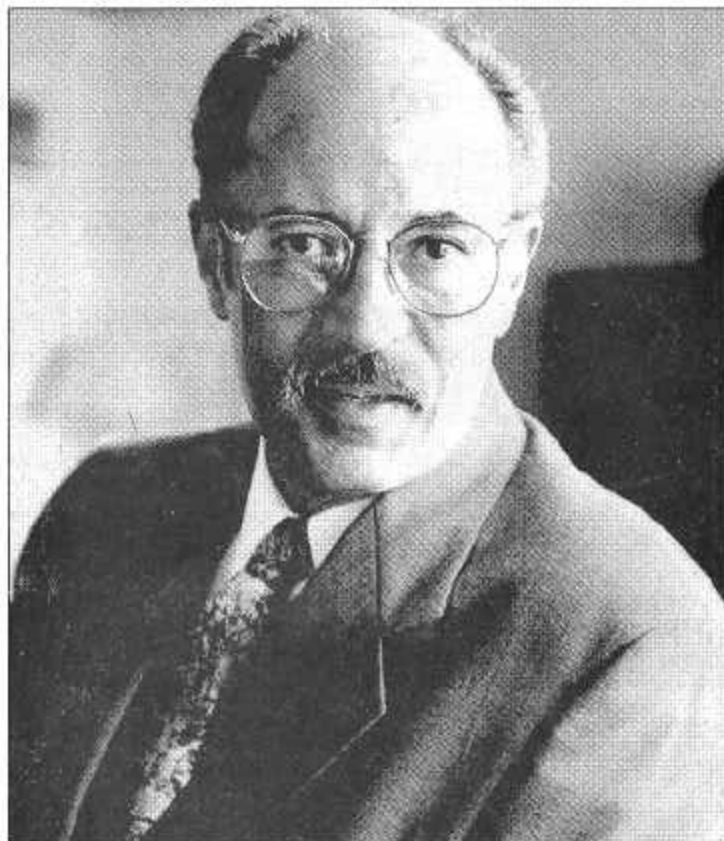
The opening celebrations will feature a jazz orchestra and full choir and the Ware Lecture with a keynote address by Pulitzer Prize-winning nature poet Mary Oliver.

As an alternative religious voice, Unitarian Universalism offers a fresh – and often controversial – faith perspective on today's most compelling social issues. Presentations on a wide range of topics give a glimpse into the UUA's passionate commitment to social justice.

UUA President William Sinkford will offer tips to religious liberals in his presentation, "Getting on Message: Challenging the Christian Right." Sinkford is the first African American to head the Unitarian Universalist Association, which is a largely white, liberal denomination. The Boston-based minister has been a particularly vocal proponent of legalizing gay marriage, a position that is in keeping with his organization's historical support of same-sex couples and their families.

Fifty-nine-year-old Sinkford was elected president of the UUA in June 2001. As president of this liberal denomination, he is responsible to the UUA Board of Trustees for administering staff and programs that serve its more than 1,000 member congregations. He also acts as principal spokesperson and minister-at-large for the association.

Prior to becoming the sev-



**William Sinkford is the first African-American elected president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, which will host its 2006 General Assembly in St. Louis June 21-25.**

enth president of UUA, Sinkford served as the association's director of congregational, district and extension services. Supervising both in-house and field staff, he managed the largest departmental budget in the association in support of the health and growth of member congregations.

Born in San Francisco in 1946, Sinkford developed a commitment to liberal religion during his teenage years when he was an active member of the First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati. He graduated cum laude from Harvard in 1968 and spent the following year in Greece as a Michael Clark Rockefeller Fellow.

After college, Sinkford worked in the field of marketing. Between 1970-1980 he held

management positions with Gillette, Avon Products, Johnson Products and Revlon. He later ran his own business, Sinkford Restorations, Inc.

The UUA was created in 1961 through a consolidation of the Universalist Church of America with the American Unitarian Association. The religion traces its roots back to Europe with an edict for religious freedom issued by the Transylvanian king, John Sigismund (1540-1571) in 1569. The organization of the Universalists in America began in 1793 and the Unitarians in 1825.

The Unitarian Universalist Association consists of over 1,010 congregations in the United States with over 220,000 members and is served by more

than 1,100 ministers. The Association is the fastest growing liberal religion in North America and this year completed its 21<sup>st</sup> consecutive year of growth at an average annual rate of nearly two percent.

Unitarian Universalism is a liberal, creedless religion with Judeo-Christian roots and draws also from Eastern, humanist and other religious traditions. The denomination teaches tolerance and respect for other religious viewpoints and affirms the worth and dignity of every person.

For more information about the UUA General Assembly, which takes place June 21-25 at America's Center, visit [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org).