

UUs Enjoy Successful District 2006 Annual Meeting

Mid-afternoon, Friday, April 28, people began to gather for the Metro NY District 2006 Annual Meeting at the Stamford (CT) Marriott Hotel. The registration area was ready by 4:00, the piano was set up in the meeting area, and displays of various sorts began to appear in the Network Mall.

And so the people began to arrive. Old friends greeted their friends happily, while those persons unknown to each other began to make the acquaintance of new UU friends. Annual meetings are a time for connection for UUs from throughout our District. They connect us to each other and give us a sense of who we are in the larger sense beyond our home congregations.

By 7:30 that evening, approximately 200 persons were in the Stamford Marriott; some eating dinner; some perusing the Network Mall; and some seated in the main hall awaiting the beginning of the festivities. Soon after 7:30, the Rev. Alison Miller, minister at the at the Morristown (NJ) Unitarian Fellowship, opened the evening with worship, followed by a welcome from District President Jerry Muntz, who introduced the entertainment for the evening, Nick Page, a UU music man extraordinaire, who soon had the audience clapping and singing along, while some even began to dance in the aisles. By this time, 200 UU souls had taken their seats in the hall.

Soon after Nick ended, the audience was treated to the always meaningful Bridging Ceremony, an opportunity to witness the youth of our District bridging over into the next phase of their lives. The evening ended with a reception enjoyed by many.

Saturday morning worship at 8:15 arrived very early for many. Those in attendance, their numbers swelling as the morning went on, experienced one of our finer preachers, the Rev. Yielbonzie Johnson, minister at the First UU Church of Essex County (Orange NJ), who shared a wonderful message that morning. The service included two numbers by the Metro NY District Choir, directed by Janet Hanson of the UU Fellowship at Stony Brook (NY).

The morning's keynote speaker, the Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt, minister at the Fourth Universalist Society (Manhattan), brought a message on radical hospitality entitled "The Real Thing" to a very engaged and appreciative audience. It set the perfect tone for the seventeen workshops that followed.

Following those workshops, some 250+ persons gathered for lunch in the main hall. Following lunch, the group was treated to a presentation by the UU children who were, for the first time, engaged in programming of their own that day. The Rev. Carol Haag, president of the Murray Grove Association, then spoke to those gathered about the new and ambitious vision and mission of the Murray Grove Retreat and Conference Center.

The annual awards followed and included the Unsung UU Award to Werner and Jean Wandelmaier, with Honorable Mentions to Charlotte Gross, Eleanor Mason and Frank Rennie); the Mendon W. Smith Award to the UU Fellowship of Huntington (NY), the June Z. Gillespie

Award to Nancy Ruckes; and the Award for Excellence in Religious Education to Susan Nykolak. Scholarships were also presented to three of our outstanding young people: Lisa Cavallero, Hannah Nevitt, and Tara Umbrino. Detailed information about the recipients will be available on the District web site at www.uumetrony.org.

Deviating from the printed agenda, District President Jerry Muntz asked outgoing Congregational Services Consultant Harry Green to join him on the stage, where he offered kind words on the occasion of Harry's departure from the District along with an appropriate gift for the occasion. He then invited a rag tag singing group composed of Laurie Golson, Andrea Lerner, and the Rev. Charlie Ortman, who sang a specially written song to Harry on this occasion, at the conclusion of which Harry thanked those assembled for his five years with the District.

The final segment of the weekend's activities was the Annual Business Meeting, presided over by District President Jerry Muntz. Following the stipulation of a quorum and approval of the minutes from 2005, the assembled delegates and other UUs heard a brief overview of the draft budget for 2006-2007 presented by the Executive Team, Andrea Lerner and Harry Green, a presentation that was informational only. (The final budget is approved by the Board alone.)

The Nominating Committee, chaired by the Rev. Jim Bridges, then presented their nominees for election to the Board and to the Nominating Committee. The slate for both was unanimously accepted, including returning Board members Doug Ford and Toby Tyler. New board members are Alexandra Collier, Richard Fierberg, Joanne Hammer, and the Rev. Cheryl Walker. Re-elected to the Nominating Committee were Frances Sink (the new Chair) and Shelly Psaris. New members are Lisa Bredbenner, the Rev. Hope Johnson, and Carolyn Musser.

The Bylaws Committee, also chaired by the Rev. Jim Bridges, gave its report recommending several revisions to the bylaws. After some discussion, revisions to Sections 1 and 3 of Article V Board of Trustees were approved. Deletion of Section 4 of Article X District Services was not approved.

Following thanks to all those who had worked on the Annual Meeting Planning Committee, President Jerry Muntz asked all members of the 2006-2007 Board of Trustees to stand with him on the stage to the acclaim of all those present.

Outgoing Congregational Services Consultant Harry Green offered closing words, and the 2006 Annual meeting had ended.