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Summary Report to IARF Membership on the 2008 Council Meeting

IARF's Council met at the Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Mie Prefecture, Japan from March 12th to 14th to learn of the progress achieved during 2007 and to plan forward for the 33rd World Congress, now scheduled for September 4th to 7th in Kochi (Cochin), Kerala, India. Put this in your date book and plan to attend!

President Abhi Janamanchi reported that the reforms promised to the Annual General Meeting held in Clearwater, Florida, July 24-25 2007 had been achieved. The administrative office has been relocated from Oxford, UK to the Church of Konko in Izu, Osaka, Japan. The financial operations have been moved to Sheffield, England. The General Assembly of Unitarians and Free Christian Churches has agreed to host the IARF's registered address at Essex Hall in London. The transition manager has successfully completed her task, and Robert Papini has re established the office systems in Osaka. The Japan Liaison Committee appointed Guji Takahiro Miwa as the honorary Secretariat Supervisor. The IARF maintains its UN presence in both New York and Geneva. Dr. John Taylor recently

represented the IARF in full debate at the UN Council, and has been asked to co-chair the CONGO (Council of NGO's). The IARF is thus in a vital position to exercise a first advocacy role within the UN's new Human Rights Council.

The IARF has now entered into a new era in its history. It has made the transition from being a professionally managed organization to being volunteer-led. This is thanks to the commitment and team work of its Japanese hosts, and the determination of its worldwide members. The Council sends best greetings to all members and looks forward to hearing about their activities, and to their providing progress reports.

New Council Leadership

We wish to express our deepest appreciation to the Rev. Abhi Janamanchi for his years of leadership of the International Council of IARF. At the end of the March Council meeting, Abhi resigned and Thomas Mathews from Kerala, India, assumed the position of the Council presidency.

European IARF Conference — Belfast, July 24-27, 2008

This conference will address two major issues:

“Religion in the Public Space” led by IARF and “Propoganda or Dialogue?” led by ELPN.

The goal of the conference is to explore the existing Liberal Protestant structures in Europe and their mission. First establishing the present situation of liberal religious thought in European socitety; and then try to lay out the part religion should ideally play in European society.

Please go to the US IARF website www.iarfus.org where you will find conference literature and the registration form.



Read the latest news from the International IARF office at

www.iarf.net

Developing IARF ‘Regional’ Groups

One of the goals of the IARF U.S. Chapter is to increase membership and to develop "regions" in the United States. But, we need your help! Would you be interested in starting a "region" in your geographic area? This is a small group of individuals who want to engage in interfaith dialogue and service. Please keep the organization in mind when talking with your interfaith groups, local clergy associations, human rights commissions, and friends. You are the best spokesperson for IARF, the first

international inter-religious organization in the world.

We have promotional materials available which we will gladly send along to you to share with your interfaith group, church, or community group. These materials include an attractive poster with bullet points about IARF, our U.S. Chapter website and brochures which include membership information. Please contact us to receive a set of these materials: nylamcculloch@earthlink.net or revdrleen@aol.com.

Quest On: The Call, The Way, The Hope: 2008 Gulbrandsen Lecture

At the conclusion of the Natalie Gulbrandsen Day at Meadville Lombard Theological School on May 8th, the Rev. Richard Boeke gave the main address challenging us to renew our commitment to interfaith dialogue and understanding. He used as the format for his address questions that had been sent to him by the Rev. Eric Cherry who is the International and Interfaith Officer for the UUA. Richard answered these questions and they can be found on our website, IARFUS.ORG. Before you look for these answers, why don't you answer them and let us know your thoughts.

Why are you so committed? Why do you continue to quest on? What is the motivation for Unitarian Universalist involvement in interfaith and international outreach?

What is the call? What moves us out of our shell to engagement with the wider world?

What do Unitarian Universalists know about “The Way” and this promise of safety, health, community and peace? What are the spiritual benefits of international engagement?”

What feeds or sustains the interfaith and international engagement of a Unitarian Universalist Congregation? What sustains our Hope?

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Natalie Gulbrandsen: A Jewel in the Crown of Interfaith Relationships

Natalie Gulbrandsen was a jewel in the crown of dedication and commitment to Unitarian Universalism, its Association and its international outreach including the Partner Church outreach and the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), the oldest interfaith organization begun in Boston over 100 years ago by a group of Unitarians who were inspired by the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. She was president of the IARF international council for three years and a faithful attendee of its congresses every three years where ever it was held...in the United States, England, Europe, India, Japan, and South Korea. Along with the Rev. Frank Robertson, she promoted and supported the circle groups at these congresses where individuals from all over the world gathered in small groups sharing with one another their religious

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These are excellent questions and need to be addressed when the budget cuts of our Unitarian Universalist Association have been severe in terms of supporting IARF. We challenge you to take a moment and let us know your answers! Go to www.iarfus.org and click on "Forum" to respond or send your comments to the editor at kmoran43@bellsouth.net.

Religious Freedom in the U.S. – Victories & Challenges



Public Funding of Churches

In a victory for religious liberty, a federal judge issued an order blocking the payment of taxpayer-funded grants to two Louisiana churches. The court found that "these non-neutral, direct money grants of taxpayer funds that go directly to fund churches and evangelistic ministries in Louisiana are clearly unconstitutional." The order comes as a result of a lawsuit filed last year by the American Civil Liberties Union.



Religion and Public Schools

An earmark provision, that would have funded the teaching of creationism in public school science classes, was added by Senator David Vitter (R-LA) to the Fiscal Year 2008 Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriation Bill.

ACLU, alongside 33 other religious, civil rights, education, science and advocacy groups challenged this unconstitutional spending of taxpayers' money. Under pressure from these organizations he withdrew this provision. We have to keep vigilance.

faith, their professions and photos of their families. In spite of the language difficulties, friendships were developed which lasted from one congress to another. Natalie believed with all her heart that personal relationships were the key to interfaith understanding. She always convinced that this opportunity to meet face to face with others of a different religious tradition was the foundation for peace and it was also the unique contribution of the International Association for Religious Freedom.

Natalie had a quality of dignity that never failed to improve the quality of an occasion. I remember when the UUA Board of Trustees went down to Washington D.C. for the civil rights march for gay, lesbian and bisexuals, Natalie appeared dressed in a lovely suit, wearing sensible shoes and carrying her purse. She was a stark contrast to others in the parade who had decided to be liberated from the waist up...no cover up for them. I asked Natalie if she always dressed for such an occasion and her answer was predictable, "Doris, it is important to add dignity to any occasion and to me, that requires being dressed properly."

(Concluded on www.iarfus.org)

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IARF U.S. Chapter Member Reception Unitarian Universalist General Assembly Ft. Lauderdale, FL, June 27, 2008

All members and friends of IARF U.S. Chapter and international guests are cordially invited to attend a reception on Friday, June 27th from 4:30-6:00 pm in the Palmetto Room of the Ft. Lauderdale Grand Hotel. The annual gathering of Unitarian Universalists at the General Assembly Convention is an opportunity for IARF members to get together to share and re-connect.

The U.S. Chapter of IARF is very pleased to be presenting the annual Service Award to Rev. Bill Schulz at this reception.

Please mark your GA calendar and plan to join us!



**U.S. CHAPTER
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FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

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See our expanded
website at:

www.iarfus.org