

**In this Issue:**

US Chapter Board Meeting Report ..... 1

Schulz Receives ..... 1  
IARF Service Award  
IARF Young Adult Network Conf..... 2

Upcoming Events Of Interest ..... 2

Call for newsletter Copy ..... 2

Belfast IARF ..... 3 & 4  
Conference Report

Photo Page:  
General Assembly 2008  
Belfast IARF Conf.

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**U.S. Chapter Board Meeting Report**

The U.S. Chapter Board met on September 10, 2008. We were reminded of the goals we had set for the year: ●Increase membership; ●Increase multi-faith representation on the Board; ●Promote relationships with other interfaith organizations; ●Develop regions in the U.S.; ●Hold a U.S. Chapter Conference.

Next, we reviewed this past year's accomplishments: ●Welcomed a new newsletter editor; ●Distributed a promotional mailing to 300 UU congregations; ●Attended a Homeland Security grant-funded interfaith conference at Tufts University in Medford, MA; ●Participated in the Natalie Gulbrandsen Day at Meadville Lombard Theological School in

Chicago; ●Attended the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office conference in New York City; ●Continued interfaith dinners; ●Sponsored two young adults to participate in the Religious Freedom Young Adult Network Conference in Amman, Jordan; ●Participated in the UUA General Assembly by meeting with others working in international organizations and hosting a reception for U.S. Chapter members and international guests; ●Co-hosted a program at Salem State on "Conflict Prevention Through Constructive Dialogue," presented by Maggie Herzig of the Public Conversations Project.

*(Continued on page 2)*

**Rev. William Schulz Receives IARF US Chapter Service Award**

In June, at the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, the United States Chapter of the International Association for Religious Freedom presented its annual award for outstanding service for the cause of religious freedom and interfaith dialogue and understanding to the Rev. Dr. William Schulz. Dr. Schulz graciously received the award at our annual reception and spoke briefly about his ongoing commitment to the work and purpose of the International Association for Religious Freedom. As past president of the Unitarian Universalist Association and past executive director of Amnesty International USA, Dr. Schulz has become a "model" for all of us seeing his continual commitment to religious freedom and human rights. We were honored to present this award to him and to express our appreciation for his support for the work of IARF.

Rev. Dr. Doris Hunter

## Several Upcoming Events of Interest

The Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America is offering 2 events this fall:

\* Shyuuka Taisai - The Great Fall Ceremony:  
Oct. 5, 2008.

\* Fall Shinto Seminar:  
Oct. 25-26.

If you are interested in attending either event, please contact the Shrine at: 360-691-6389, or email - [Kannushi@TsubakiShrine.org](mailto:Kannushi@TsubakiShrine.org)

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The North American Interfaith Network Annual NAINConnect Conference will be held in Kansas City, MO, June 25-28, 2009. This year's theme is: "Experiencing the Spirit in Education: The Challenge of Religious Pluralism." For more information and to submit a workshop proposal contact Peter Laurence at: [PeterLL@concentric.net](mailto:PeterLL@concentric.net).



Read the latest news from the International IARF office at [www.iarf.net](http://www.iarf.net)

## North American Youths Attend IARF Young Adult Network Conference in Amman, Jordan

We are very proud and delighted to report that with funding from the IARF US Chapter, the International Association for Liberal Religious Women, the Canadian Chapter of the IARF, and gifts from friends, two young adults, Stephanie Derrick (US) and Hillary Kaell (Canada) were able to travel to Amman, Jordan in August for a young adult conference sponsored, in part, by IARF.

Both young women are enrolled in PhD programs at Harvard University in the field of religious studies. They expressed an interest in interfaith work beyond the academic walls and hope to be involved with IARF in the future.

The conference focused on human rights and offered many opportunities for participants from numerous countries to get to know one another. They found this experience was culturally challenging, but at the same time provided them with a unique environment in which to share their perspectives relating to interfaith understanding.

The US Chapter will host a program entitled "The IARF: Through the Lens of the Young Adult Seminar on Religion and Human Rights in Amman, Jordan," followed by a reception. It will be held at the First Parish in Cambridge, MA, on October 23rd, 7:30 pm.

*(Board Meeting continued from page 1)*

In the coming months we will be holding our first Boston area region meeting (Oct. 19, 1 pm at the First Parish Belmont Church in Belmont, MA), which will include planning for a local youth conference this winter; hosting a program and reception for the two women who participated in the Jordan Conference; continuing promotion of interfaith dinners; and developing plans for a conference in winter 2010 in Clearwater, FL.

Our wish list: • Members will respond to our call for newsletter copy (see item below); • Members will continue to invite people to join the IARF; • Contact us if you would like to be part of the planning committee for the winter 2010 conference in Clearwater; • Someone with website development experience will step up to the plate and consider volunteering their time and talent to update and maintain our U.S. Chapter website.

## Call for Newsletter Copy



Have you been doing any interfaith work lately, either in your own area or perhaps elsewhere that you would like to share with fellow IARF members? We are looking for articles of this nature to give others ideas on how to promote dialogue and understanding between people of different faiths. Accompanying photos are welcome. Keep your submission succinct and be aware that the editor may need to edit the content to fit the available space. Please send all submissions to: [kmoran43@bellsouth.net](mailto:kmoran43@bellsouth.net) or mail to: Editor, US IARF Chapter Newsletter, 4429 Oak Bay Drive W., Jacksonville, FL 32277

## Richard Boeke Reports on July's Belfast IARF Conference

(This report in its entirety appears on our website: [www.iarfus.org](http://www.iarfus.org))

Belfast was host to two related conferences July 24 – 27, 2008. On July 24 the European Liberal Protestant Network (ELPN) met in the church sanctuary. The ELPN “exists to bring together European Liberal Protestants within the International Association for Religious Freedom.”

ELPN brings together the Non-Subscribing Presbyterians, the Transylvania Unitarians, Remonstrants and other liberal Protestants from the Netherlands and Germany. After the welcome, a memorial silence honoured the Rev. Peronne Boddaert, the European Organizer of IARF, who tragically died last year.

Speakers including Rev. Chris Hudson of All Souls Church, Belfast, & Rev. Tina Geels of Utrecht called for a renewal of our liberal witness in our churches, in the IARF, and in our world. Rev. Nigel Playfair, Adrian Moir & the Presbyterians of Belfast were fine hosts at the reception that afternoon & for the IARF Conference the next two days.

Friday morning the IARF Conference opened. The Rt. Rev William McMillan spoke from his long history with the IARF: “As a student, I assisted with the IARF Congress in Belfast in 1955. American Unitarian President Frederick May Eliot quoted Thomas Jefferson to us: “*Error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is free to combat it.*”

McMillan told us, “This is not a time for gentile liberals who avoid explosive issues. There is so much trash in advertisements today; liberals shy from challenging the evils. Liberals today have become morally lazy. We have excused wrong where we should have condemned it.”

After McMillan’s lecture, we split into three workshops: Shlomo Alon led a discussion of “Religion in the Middle East,” Sandor Mathe led “Religion and the European Union.” Tina Gells and others discussed plans for the European Liberal Protestant Network (ELPN). The workshops were helpful in allowing everyone to speak up. Three more workshops were held Saturday morning: 1) Human Rights; 2) A History of IARF by former IARF Staff member Lucie Meijer; and 3) IARF Europe: The Move Ahead. This concluded with Gudrun Hahn and Wolfgang Jantz extending an invitation from Germany for a meeting of IARF Europe & Middle East in Frankfurt, October 20 - 21, 2009.

I will only try to give a high point from each of six lectures we heard. Rev. Wytske Dijkstra, leading organizer of the conference, spoke on “Religion in the Public Space.” With a quotation from a speech this January, she set her theme, “*God is back, but the churches have yet to get used to it.*” (Full text available). This theme of the Spirit moving beyond the churches into the marketplace was taken up by the Rev. Ivo de

Jong in a multimedia program in the afternoon. He carried us from the songs of van Morrison to Rembrandt’s painting of the prodigal son.

The “Troubles” in Northern Ireland and the work of Reconciliation were presented in three ways: First, the Rev. Lena Cockcroft told us the story of Lagan College, the first religiously integrated secondary school in Northern Ireland — its motto, *Uit Sint Unim*, “*That They May Be One.*” A bus tour in the afternoon took us to beautiful parks, also along HIGH FENCES topped with rolls of barbed wire, separating Protestant and Catholic Neighbourhoods.

After dinner in the modern central hall of the church, Dr. David Stevens told us the story of the **Corrymeela Community**, which won the Niwano Peace Prize in 1997. Like the writing of Kurt Vonnegut, the story begins with the 1945 bombing of Dresden. Ray Davey, the founder of Corrymeela, like Vonnegut, was a prisoner who survived the fire bombing of Dresden. His 1945 memories of bodies and ruins of Dresden were part of the inspiration that led him in 1965 to organize a community of reconciliation in Northern Ireland with centers on the North Coast near Ballycastle, and in Belfast.

As we approached the end of Belfast IARF, two lectures focused on the future of the IARF. First, Bishop Arpad Szabo gave an excellent paper on

(Continued on page 4)



Don't forget to  
check out our  
website at:  
**www.iarfus.org**

**Save This  
Date!  
&  
Watch This  
Space!**

*The IARF U.S. Chapter  
Conference will be  
held in January 2010 in  
Clearwater, Florida.*

*More details to follow*

*(Belfast continued from page 3)*

Our Common Challenge: IARF, Its Purpose and Future. (Full text available). Bishop Szabo first stressed the importance of using personal language, speaking from roots in our own religious community and tradition. "Our words shape the reality to which we respond." Speaking from the struggles of his own church in Transylvania, he warned of barriers to cooperation which are intellectual, emotional and in memories of historic conflict. "It is hardly surprising that religious communities resent and mistrust one another.

Fittingly, IARF President Thomas Mathew from India had the final word. He told us of the six major, current projects of the IARF:

- In mid-August 2008, a **youth conference** in Jordan with 35 to 40 participants.
- The **Human Rights Education Project** partly funded by the Dutch Government continues in the Philippines, India, and Sri Lanka.
- The **India Chapter** of the IARF is meeting in Mysore, August 23-26.
- April 2009, in Amersfort, the Netherlands, there will be an IARF Conference for **Women in Ministry**.
- Our witness at the **United Nations** guided by Dr. John Taylor. IARF is one of less than 200 groups that have full consulting status with the UN.
- The **2010 IARF Congress** will be held September 4 – 7 in Cochin City in southern Kerala, India. There will be low cost rooms for about US \$30 a night and rooms in a three-star hotel about \$70 a night. In 2010, a new IARF Council will be elected.

The IARF Office is now hosted by the Konkoko Church of Izuo, Osaka, Japan. Thanks to Robert Papini and the unpaid volunteers who staff the office, this arrangement may change after the 2010 Congress.

*Richard Boeke*

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

4429 OAK BAY DRIVE WEST  
JACKSONVILLE, FL 32277



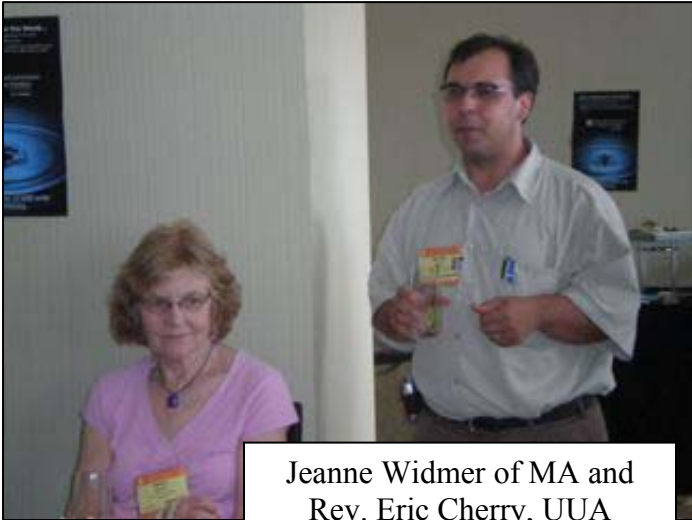
**USIARF AT UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY JUNE 2008**



**IARF Booth at General Assembly**



**Rev. Hunter with Rev. Pearl Greene Marbaniang, & Rev. Derrick Pariat of Unitarian Union of NE India**



**Jeanne Widmer of MA and Rev. Eric Cherry, UUA**



**Rev. D. Hunter and Bill Schulz.**



**July 2008 Belfast IARF Conference**

