



HUmanists News

Newsletter of the HUManists 2011 No. 1 • P. O. Box 185202 Hamden, CT 06518-0202

Passing the Torch

David E. Schafer

Saturday, June 26, 2010 was for many of us a high point in the history of UU Humanism. On that day leaders from all over came together during the General Assembly, many of them meeting each other for the first time, at the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis, where John Dietrich once cast a spell over his congregation, for our first all-day Historic Humanist Homecoming.

Over and over again we heard from those present that they had flourishing Humanist groups at home in their congregations; many of them had Humanist ministers; and that for them, Humanism is definitely alive and well in the UUA. During the day, besides offering an opportunity to listen to a series of inspiring talks on the past, present, and future of UU Humanism, the Homecoming made it possible to have a real business meeting for a change, and to elect new board members—especially a new president to succeed me in that office. From my perspective it was definitely time for new energies and new ideas—in a word, for new leadership. The members rose to the occasion and unanimously elected a person whose skills and experience ideally suited him for the job.

So now, for those of you who don't yet know him, let me introduce Dr. John B. Hooper:

- He earned a Ph.D. in chemistry from Carnegie Mellon University in 1969.
- He became a member of several scientific societies and advocacy organizations.
- He's now retired after a career as a scientist, including several years as a research and development executive.
- In his retirement he's pursued interests in science, religion, and public policy. *Continues Page 2*

President's Corner

John B. Hooper

Greetings HUManists! I feel very fortunate and honored to succeed my friend David Schafer as your president. It is with humility and no small amount of trepidation that I take the baton from such an extraordinarily dedicated and accomplished humanist leader. Thank you, David for all you do. When I was elected president of the HUManists at last year's General Assembly, I had been serving as president of the Unitarian Universalist Religious Naturalists (UURN) for about three years. UURN and HUManists have much in common. Determining how the two organizations may work even more closely together will be a major effort for us over the next year or so. *Continues Page 3*

HUManists Meeting and Reception at GA This Year

This year's General Assembly and 50th Anniversary celebration of the UUA will provide an opportunity for us to reassert our commitment to the Humanist principles that lie at the core of Unitarian Universalism.

It will be a time of renewal, learning, community building, and sharing once again the joy of being together. A Members & Friends Reception and an annual meeting of the HUManists are in the planning stages.

Come and hear about the exciting new affiliations and activities your association will be launching. Look for announcements at the HUManists booth in the exhibition hall for time and place. And if we have your email, you will be notified directly ahead of time. (Send your email to greghuu@snet.net.)

Passing the Torch continued from Page 1

- In 2001, following an avocational interest, he obtained a Master of Arts degree from Clark University in epistemology.
- As an elected member of the UUA's Commission on Social Witness, he was responsible for guiding the first four-year Congregational Study/Action Issue on peacemaking through the UUA Social Witness process, resulting in the adoption of the "Creating Peace" Statement of Conscience.
- He's the immediate past Chair of the Board of Trustees at the Unitarian Church in Westport, where he sings in three choirs.
- He's past president of the Unitarian Universalist Religious Naturalists (UURN).
- He's married to Dr. Gail Pesyna, a vice president of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation; Gail and John are both members of the UUA President's Council.

It is obvious even from this brief resume that John knows his way around the UUA. It will also be apparent that he brings to the tasks before him broad interests as well as administrative experience. What you may not have noticed at first is that he comes to us from a background in UU Religious Naturalism. In my judgment, that experience will prove to enrich his outlook and give him a distinct advantage. Here's why:

As most of us know from unpleasant experience, the terms "Religious Humanism" and "Religious Naturalism" are both easily misunderstood, especially because definitions of *religion*, *humanism*, and *naturalism* (and other closely related words) all invite debate. Take "nature," for example. A wise professor of mine once pointed out that "every age vows allegiance to Nature, but every age redefines Nature to suit itself." This is nowhere more evident than in the contrast between the 18th century, which saw Nature primarily as orderly, and the 19th century, which saw it as chaotic. (They were both partly right.)

John Dietrich, Mason Olds, and many others have emphasized that Religious Humanism as they defined it is a *naturalistic* humanism, and some of its adherents have come to take this fact for granted. Others, however—both within the movement and out-

side of it—seem to have underestimated its significance or ignored it altogether. The considerable success of Bill Murry's 2006 book *Reason and Reverence*, with its novel emphasis on the phrase "humanistic religious naturalism," made it appear likely that the basically intimate relation of Religious Humanism to Religious Naturalism had somehow been overlooked by more than a few people, and that more explicit reference to this relationship might help some truth-seekers to understand, and possibly even to accept, both points of view.

On a personal note: Over the seven years I have been president of the HUHumanists Association I have enormously appreciated your support of the organization and of my efforts to promote UU Humanism. During that time I have been especially gratified by:

- (1) the consistently high quality of GA presentations we have been able to present;
- (2) what I have sensed to be the increasing acceptance, or at least the increased expression of acceptance, of Humanism by the UU rank and file, clergy and laity;
- (3) our ability to grow steadily (albeit slowly) in numbers, year after year;
- (4) our re-publication of two classic Humanist paperbacks, both by Mason Olds, *American Religious Humanism* and ten edited sermons of *John Dietrich, What If the World Went Humanist?*
- (5) the always impressive showing by Roger Brewin and his entourage at our GA exhibit booths; and
- (6) our cooperation with both non-Humanist UU groups and non-UU Humanist groups. In my "second retirement" I plan to continue my activity with the HUHumanists Association. There will always be plenty to do, and in fact I'm beginning to sense that I may find myself working even harder than before, under the energetic leadership of John Hooper.

David Schafer

President's Corner *continued from Page 1*

So, where do we go from here? HUUmanists' membership is made up of both laypersons and clergy, many of whom are scholars, activists, or both. This gives us the unique opportunity to pursue programs in three mission-based areas:

- **Scholarship, teaching and ministry** that build on our deep humanistic heritage and examine a way of living that emphasizes reason, compassion, community, nature, and social responsibility.
- **Promotion and communication** that speak to the awe and wonder of being alive, with a language of reverence that recognizes that it is nature, not humankind, that is ultimate.
- **Advocacy** within Unitarian Universalist community and in the wider world for justice, love, kindness, peace, generosity and preservation of the natural environment, armed with our humanist conviction of the dignity and worth of all humans, and all that follows from this principle.

If we are to be truly effective in these areas, we must develop more active connections and affiliations with others, who have values and objectives similar to our own—even if we don't find ourselves to be in 100% agreement with their respective philosophies. In general, like us, these individuals and organizations take a largely monistic view of reality and are committed to standing on the side of love and reason. I am convinced that if we HUUmanists/Religious Naturalists can get beyond our internal squabbles about theism (with or without the prefixes: "a" or "non") and the like, we can take a leadership position in the struggle against unreason, inhumanity, and oppressive religiosity.

Here are some activities under consideration:

Scholarship, Teaching and Ministry

- Arrange programs, forums and lectures on religious humanism and naturalism, and affiliate with organizations that focus on the relationship between science and liberal religion
- Encourage religious humanist and naturalist writing and expand our journal, *Religious Naturalism*

- Develop curricula for use in religious education, and courses for use in the training of liberal religious clergy
- Arrange for the publication of religious humanist/naturalist books and other literature

Promotion and Communication

- Encourage the establishment of local religious humanist/naturalist groups
- Publish a periodical newsletter
- Maintain a religious humanist/naturalist presence on the internet—website, listserv, social networking sites
- Hold discussion groups, seminars, workshops, and conferences

Advocacy

- Actively participate in Unitarian Universalist social witness initiatives and similar liberal religious efforts in support of our core values
- Partner with other humanist and naturalist groups in public witness actions supporting humanist/naturalist values such as the separation of church and state, support of free thought, and defense of the inherent worth and dignity of every human being
- Partner with other groups supporting the free exercise of scientific research, reason-based public policy, and the teaching of authentic scientific principles in our public schools

This is your organization. What ideas do you have? In what area(s) would like to participate? Please let me know! Hope to see you at GA.

John Hooper

religious humanism

Upcoming Issue

Next Issue of *religious humanism* Heading to the Printer and (then) You

religious humanism, Volume 41, No. 2, is in the final editing stage. It should be arriving in your mailbox in July. Featured will be articles on the arts and liberal religion, including “Hauntings” by Lynn Hunt and David Breeden’s “Theo/a/poetica.”

Meanwhile, your comments, via mail or email on Volume 41, No. 1, are welcomed at rabrewin@aol.com or 10559 S. Wood Street, Chicago, IL 60643.

Previous Issue of *religious humanism* Heading to Prisons Around the Country

As we’ve done twice before, the editor and a couple of local volunteers have pulled apart the pages and trimmed down to fit in a standard envelope size, some forty copies of *religious humanism*, Volume 40, No. 2, for mailing to prisoners at various correctional institutions. These folks have subscribed through the UU Church of the Larger Fellowship’s Prison Ministry run by Rev. Patty Franz, and have indicated a specific preference for humanist materials.

Weight and size limitations and format requirements (non-bound pages in many cases) mandate the extra preparation, so that individual prison mailrooms do not reject what we send. Thanks to Renata Kleimchen and Chris Brewin for their assistance with this project.

Roger Brewin, Editor



GA 2010

June 23-27, 2010

Stellar GA Booth Crew Does It Again!

*(UU Humanism once more an easy sell
for the HUUmanist Hustlers)*

Please forgive me a little self-serving hyperbole. For the eighth year in a row, the number of newly enrolled and renewing HUUmanist members and Journal subscribers at General Assembly (June 23-27, 2010) reached or exceeded 100. Our booth in the Exhibit Hall at the Minneapolis Convention Center also sold nearly 20 late registrations to the Historic Humanist Homecoming (see full description elsewhere in this issue) on Saturday the 26th at First Unitarian Church.

Ever since the June 2003 GA in Boston, the HUU booth has been a destination for folks looking for an institutional way to express their desire for a truly rational religion within the UU experience. In addition to the primary foci of recruiting new members, renewing existing ones, and promoting HUUmanist GA lectures, workshops plus our Annual Meeting, the booth has served over the years to showcase the latest edition of the Journal of Religious Humanism, present Humanist authors, promote wider UU causes which the organization backed, and attract the younger (and younger-at-heart) crowd with the best selection of buttons and bumper-stickers around.

In 2010 we were once again among the largest display spaces in the Exhibit Hall, challenging the Beacon Bookstore for most visited booth. Our space, replete with a mini bookstore (27 humanist titles—we sold over 50 copies of “Good Without God”), the aforementioned adhesive and pin-on eye candy display, poster-sized schedules of the Homecoming events and Greg Epstein’s HUU sponsored GA lecture, was presided over by a larger than life portrait of a grandfatherly Charles Darwin (“Darwin Loves You” was one of our button best-sellers).

For thirty three hours over five days, the core crew of Roger Brewin, Jack Reich and Pat Everett, ably assisted by volunteers from the AHA Minnesota Chapter, the Humanist Institute and UU Religious Naturalists, greeted, exhorted, edified and upon rare occasion, *Continues Page 8, left column: “GA Booth”*

Financial and Dues Notices

July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

Financial Results for Last Fiscal Year

A condensed report of income and expenses for the HUUMANISTS for last fiscal year, July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010, is shown at right.

Most things reported include all relevant income and expenses so that a net amount is shown, such as for sales and HUUMANIST Homecoming.

Income consists primarily of memberships and subscriptions, and probably includes most of the “unspecified deposits.” Sales are mostly book sales, almost all at General Assembly. The net amount reported is negative because of book purchases being greater than sales.

The HUUMANIST Homecoming event cost much more than was taken in because of lower attendance than expected.

The largest expenses are for our primary functions of a booth at General Assembly and publishing the journal. Other major costs are for storing books and journals, for web site development, and administrative. Administrative costs include credit card fees (largely at GA), office supplies, and postage.

I am working on attributing all costs to the proper function, such as making sure that income is allocated to memberships or subscriptions, postage for sending the journal is listed with journal costs, etc. Once we have the complete costs of each function, we will have a better idea how to control costs and to evaluate what is needed.

We are concerned that membership and subscription payments do not fully cover the costs of the journal, newsletter, General Assembly and administrative costs. We are able to continue operating because of a bequest that covers our deficits, but this cannot last indefinitely. Our hope is that membership and subscription renewal requests will improve and remove our deficit.

Greg Seaman, Treasurer

Income and Expenses

July 2009 - June 2010

Income

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Memberships & subscriptions | \$ 7,758 |
| Donations | 161 |
| Sales | (3,701) |
| Unspecified Deposits | 7,016 |
| HUUMANIST Homecoming | (8,940) |
| Interest earned | 226 |
| <i>Total Income</i> | \$ 2,520 |

Expenses

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Advertising design | \$ 400 |
| Newsletter | 752 |
| General Assembly | 7,049 |
| Journal | 7,570 |
| Admin | 1,300 |
| Data & Inventory Handling | 1,827 |
| Web Site | 1,455 |
| <i>Total Expenses</i> | \$ 20,352 |

Net Income

\$ (17,833)

Time to Renew

Have you renewed your membership or subscription to *religious humanism* recently? We are currently operating with expenses greater than income, and need everyone to renew their membership to the HUUMANISTS Association annually or biannually. Donations are much appreciated.

You can send us a check for membership at \$50 for one year or \$90 for two years, or for a subscription to *religious humanism* for one year at \$22 and two years at \$40. (Student membership is \$25 per year.) Memberships, subscriptions and donations can also be made by credit card at our web site, www.huumanists.org.

Do we have your email? If not please send to greghuu@snet.net.

HUUmanists Association Annual Meeting

First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis
Saturday, June 26, 2010

1. President David Schafer called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

2. Greg Seaman presented the Treasurer's Report showing assets of \$118,000. Expenses exceeded revenues during the past fiscal year. David Schafer reported that the association has a history of losing money on an operating basis but has been fortunate over the years to have received several bequests from generous donors. A member asked if there is a development committee and the president indicated that there is not such a committee. Another member inquired about why credit card fees are so high; the treasurer explained that there was a penalty fee related to security around handling credit cards but that this situation has since been corrected.

It was moved by Louis Altman, and seconded, that the meeting accept the Treasurer's Report. Passed.

3. The chair of the nominating committee, Stefan Jonasson, presented the nominating committee report.

- *For President (term expiring 2012):*
John Hooper
- *For Secretary (term expiring 2012):*
Walter W. Wells
- *For Director (terms expiring 2013):*
W. Lance Haworth Gayle C. Walter
- *For Director (terms expiring 2012):*
Carol Floyd* Jane Esbensen*

It was moved by Alan Egly, and seconded, that nominations close. Passed.

It was then moved by Dick Renfro, and seconded, that the nominees be elected as presented. Passed.

4. A member suggested suggested that the board investigate joining the Secular Coalition of America and a short discussion ensued.

It was moved by Dick Renfro, and seconded, that this meeting authorize the board to explore membership in the Secular Coalition of America. Passed.

5. The president then opened the meeting to a wide-reaching discussion of the state of Humanism within the Unitarian Universalist Association and the role of HUUmanists in promoting it. The following observations were made and ideas generated:

- (a) One member expressed concern about the UU World magazine and its frivolous content, suggesting that Humanists should have 40% of the content and perhaps even insert HUUmanists magazine into it. Another member suggested that HUUmanists submit an article to the World reporting on today's meeting.
- (b) Woody Kaplan noted that the UUA president seems "Humanist friendly" and suggested that it is as important to seek a representative percentage of seat on the UUA board as it is to seek representative coverage in the UU World. Doug Muder questioned the assumption that such a proportion of UUs are Humanists, noting that "how do we know that?" is a legitimate question that naturally arises when we assert how many people we represent.
- (c) A member suggested that HUUmanists encourage the UUA to reach for the low-hanging fruit by going after the 15% of individual whom survey report are to our spiritual left rather than recruiting from the opposite direction.
- (d) President-elect John Hooper reminded members that part of elevating Humanism involves pointing out where it already exists.

* The nominees for director for terms expiring in 2012 are being presented to fill the remainder of the terms of Mary Louise DeWolf, who has resigned, and John Hooper, who has been nominated for the presidency.)

- (e) Alan Egly strongly advised that the first item of business for the new board should be to work with a consultant to develop the organizational capacity of the board. Moreover, a program committee could look for opportunities to continue offering events such as this weekend’s Humanist Homecoming.
 - (f) Two members suggested we seize the opportunity to develop professional leadership for Humanists, including developing a scholarship fund.
 - (g) A member encouraged the board to study the financial viability of the organization.
 - (h) A member encouraged us to be more forthcoming about “public humanism”—proclaiming “I do this because I am a Humanist.”
 - (i) One member recommended that the board explore the possibility of putting John Dietrich’s lectures on the web, while another urged the board to explore sponsoring and intergenerational dance at next year’s GA, as had been suggested by Greg Epstein.
6. It was moved by Stefan Jonasson, and seconded, that we express our gratitude to David Schafer for his service as president and for making this day possible.
 7. The meeting was adjourned.

David E. Schafer
President

Stefan M. Jonasson
Secretary pro tem



HUUmanists Officers, Directors & Others

2010-2011

Officers

President
Term Expires 2012
John B. Hooper

Vice President
Term Expires 2011
Wendy Jerome

Secretary
Term Expires 2012
Walter W. Wells

Treasurer
Term Expires 2011
Gregory G. Seaman

Past President
David E. Schafer

Directors

Terms Expire 2011
Stefan M. Jonasson
Kathleen D. Korb

Terms Expire 2012
Carol Everly Floyd
Rev. Jane Esbensen

Terms Expire 2013
Gayle C. Walter
(vacancy)

Others

religious humanism
Editor
Roger A. Brewin

GA Booth *continued from Page 8*

(and only in cases of intransigence) badgered-with-good-humor, more than a thousand attendees who stopped by, to express in deeds as well as words, their hopes for a continued reign of rationalism within UU ranks. About 500 complied directly, taking complementary copies of the Journal and information on our programs, making purchases or donations, reporting on humanist activities back home, becoming members or signing up as representatives in their local congregations.

You pretty much couldn't miss us—even those we didn't engage directly among the two thousand plus who made it into the Exhibit Hall saw humanist greetings waving atop ten foot high poles, or heard Jack's occasional (and highly refined) circus barker humor. What a ball we had! Thanks to all of you who stopped by to sign up, pick up the latest, make suggestions, or just chew the fat. We'll see some of you in Charlotte in June, 2011.

Roger Brewin, HUU Booth Coordinator

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