

**PROGRAM OF THE 137th ANNUAL MEETING
MAY MEMORIAL UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF SYRACUSE
June 3, 1975 - 8:15 P.M.**

Presiding: Helen F. Obrist, President of the Society

1. Call to Order
2. Appointment of Election Tellers
3. Approval of Minutes
4. Treasurer's Report
5. President's Report
6. Minister's Report
7. Elections
 - a. Nominations
 - b. Introduction of Candidates
 - c. Balloting
8. Presentation of Annual Awards
9. Election Results
10. Installation of New Board and Officers
11. Adjournment

7:30 P.M.

Dessert

Arranged and Served By

Betty Ketchum and Committee

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF SYRACUSE

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF SYRACUSE
1000 N. GARDEN ST.
SYRACUSE, N.Y. 13202
TEL. 453-1111

ANNUAL AWARD RECIPIENTS

1955 Mrs. H. W. Jordan
1956 Miss Elizabeth Lewis
Dr. Marion Dooley
1957 Dr. and Mrs. Reginald Maxwell
Mr. William Yerington
1958 Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Vincent
Miss Helen Hackton
1959 Mrs. James Tracy
Mr. Ernest Bowden
Mrs. Walter Slagle
1960 Mrs. Clarence Bull
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Tufts
1961 Mrs. Lawrence Gould
Mr. Frank Macomber
1962 Mrs. William Eager
Mr. and Mrs. William McLerman
1963 Mrs. Laurance Siegfried
Mrs. Howard Viets
Mr. and Mrs. H. Brainard Fancher
1964 Dr. and Mrs. Warren Walsh
1965 Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle Ashley
1966 Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Kharas
~~1967 Mrs. Helen MacKnight~~
~~Mr. and Mrs. Robert Beadel~~
1968 Mr. and Mrs. John Chamberlin
Dr. Lawrence Gould
1969 Mr. and Mrs. Richard Johnson
The May Memorial Choir
1970 Miss Mary Cooper
1971 Prof. and Mrs. Montague Charman
1972 Mr. and Mrs. Robert Burdick
1973 Mrs. Albert Wertheimer
Mr. Charles White
1974 Mrs. Betty Moore
1975 Max Kuhlen

SAMUEL JOSEPH MAY CITATION

1967 Miss Eleanor Rosebrugh
1969 Mr. and Mrs. Donald Rumsey
1970 Mr. George Michaels
1973 Mr. Daniel Ellsberg
1974 Mrs. J. Howland Auchincloss

MINISTER'S REPORT
ANNUAL MEETING OF MAY MEMORIAL UNITARIAN SOCIETY
June 3, 1975

This is an auspicious occasion for me -- my first annual report as minister of May Memorial. After almost a full church year with you I confess to the hope that it is the first of many, many more.

There is one feature of the minister's report that is never a happy reminder, but an important one. That concerns the deaths among our friends and membership during the past year. May I remind you of them now: Virginia Torrey, Allen Prescott, Phyllis Berg, John Fuller, Louise Chamberlin, Vernon Steensland and Evelyn Abel.

There are other goodbyes -- less painful, but still sad -- that we have had to say this year. Twenty-two of our members have moved out of the area including such stalwarts as Anne LaMar, the Nashans and King Stodola whose careers have taken them to widely separated parts of the country.

But there have been "hello's" to say as well. You will note in other reports that we have been able to welcome forty-two new members since last year at this time. While I'm in the area of statistics I might mention that the institution of marriage is still popular. We've been averaging one wedding a month since I've been here -- about half of them for members or friends of MMUS.

Apart from my regular duties as your minister I have spent this year getting in touch with you as individuals and becoming acquainted with you as a corporate institution with a unique history, character and habits. I have been observing the Syracuse community with an eye to future involvements, but have not yet decided upon where and how. I will shortly be completing my term as a member of the UUA Accreditation Committee for Directors of Religious Education (a UUA Board appointment). I have spent one day each month in either Albany or New York City in partial fulfillment of my responsibilities as a member of the Advisory Council on Citizen Participation for the N.Y. State Dept. of Mental Hygiene.

Let me say something about the year ahead. I plan to continue our Mini-Fellowship program. It is my general impression that there are mixed feelings, among those who are active, about this program. Some like it very much the way it is; others wish it to be something more or other than the way it is. I have very consciously refrained from attempting to shape the nature or character of our Monday evenings together. I do think we are at the point where those who regularly attend feel comfortable enough with me and with each other to begin taking more leadership and assuming more responsibility for what happens during our time together. I do want to expand the function of the Mini-Fellowships. I plan to ask one family or individual in each area to act as co-ordinators for two purposes: 1) to help integrate new-comers by seeing to it that they are specifically and personally invited to the meetings in their area as soon as they show up on our records; 2) to keep tabs on the health and welfare of our membership in each area.

I have two specific recommendations, involving Constitutional amendments, to make to our new Board of Trustees which I think it appropriate and important to tell you about now so that you may make your views on them known to the Board.

I will recommend that a Religious Education Council be established as an elective body of the Society similar to the Board of Trustees. It would be the responsibility of the Council, subject -- where necessary -- to the approval of the Board, to foster and maintain a religious education program, determine policy thereto, and have direct supervision of the church school and its facilities. This would relieve the Board of some of its burden, making it a more efficient body, but more importantly it would put the church school program and those who devote time, energy and talent to it in the proper perspective and framework. The future of any church and religious movement depends, in large measure, on its youth. If there is any program in the church that needs to be seen as the responsibility of the entire church family it is certainly the religious education program. We need the organizational machinery that will provide greater continuity and consistency in the policies and operation of the program, that will place more responsibility directly on our membership, and give those to whom some of that responsibility is delegated an authority more nearly equal to their responsibilities.

I will also recommend a change in our fiscal year (currently the calendar year) to coincide more closely with our program year, i.e. July 1 to June 30. This would accomplish a number of desirable things. It would allow our Board and committees to take responsibility at the beginning of the fiscal year instead of half way through it. It would allow us to conduct our canvass in the early spring when people's tax obligations are clearer in their minds (including the fact, in some cases, that a larger pledge might put them in a smaller tax bracket). It would allow us to start the church year in September without immediately having to develop and train a canvass organization which then has to do its job just prior to the busy, Christmas spending season. It would also allow us to institute a more relaxed, but equally important canvass in the fall of each year. I am speaking now of a suggestion made some months ago by Bob Burdick, that we ought to have a needs and participation canvass. The only time we make an effort to contact all of our members and friends in a personal way is when we want money from them. It ought to add considerably to the life, spirit and vitality of our church family if we made a yearly effort to contact each individual and family not to tell them what we need from them, but to find out what they need from us, what they want from the church, what kinds of needs are not being satisfied, what kind of involvement they would like to have in the program and activities of the church.

I will also recommend, in concert with the above, that our Annual Meeting be required to be held prior to April 30th, at which time the proposed budget for the next year may be adopted along with the conduct of elections and other necessary business. The principle purpose of this proposal is to allow the new Board and Religious Education Council (if we establish one) more time to get organized, appoint committee chairperson, and make plans for the next year before the summer hiatus and exodus begin. The incumbents in all positions would be asked to continue to serve, ex officio, through June to assist and train those who are new to the positions.

I have other changes to recommend, but they are of a much more minor, administrative nature, and I will not go into them here.

Let me return now to the year that is coming to a close. We have been reasonably successful in achieving a balanced variety in our Sunday worship program thanks to the Reading Group which presented two fine programs (including one created by Harriette Robinson as part of our AUA birthday celebration), and our guests in the pulpit: James Hobart, Charles Howe, William DeWolfe and Mary Barkalow. Our five Family Celebrations which caused me the most "Preparation anxiety" of any, were also the most rewarding.

The highlight of our church year is, of course, still fresh in our minds — the many and varied programs surrounding our extended celebration of the founding of the American Unitarian Association 150 years ago. Various efforts have been made to thank a huge number of people whose efforts made it such a success and I won't try to do it again. But I would like to reiterate my appreciation for two people whose tremendous commitment of time and talent made our exhibit not only possible, but a remarkable achievement — Hildegarde Vander Sluis and Martin Kronman.

They and all the others involved illustrate a fact of church life: a vital, creative church is the product of a vital, creative membership, and believe me MMUS is a vital, creative church. Cathy and I had that impression when we accepted your "call" and this year has more than amply validated it.

Breaking in a new minister is not, I realize, a simple task. You have all gone about it with consideration, tact and support. This is especially true of Helen Obrist and the Board; of Frank Decker and finance committee; of Gerry Lanier and his canvass organization; of Bob Burdick, Pat Cerson and company who have not just maintained, but enhanced our church school program; of Vern Smith who engineered a wonderfully varied and enriching adult program; of Jean Hoefler who tolerated and transcended my eccentricities and still managed to edit our weekly newsletter; of Joyce Ball who never let me depart too ~~far~~ from local tradition without serious reflection; of Mary Burdick, Mary-Lib Kronman, Moe Kuhlen, & Sarah Auchincloss, who aided and abetted, counseled and encouraged me in a variety of ways; of Betsy Leib and her invincible energy as Membership Chairperson; of Jeanne Ashley who made sure that you at least had something beautiful to look at each week if the sermon failed to hold your attention or inspire you; of Frank Macomber and choir who were so easy to work with and added so much to our Sunday services; of Robin Sibert whose faithfulness to Pub provided a frequent opportunity for me to discuss contracts with many of you (over the Bridge table that is); and, of course June Card and James O'Dell and Vance Osborne and Charlie White and Sandy Noonan and Don Stearns and Sumi Gold and Bob Clark and --- and I knew I shouldn't have started this list because I'm bound to leave many of you unmentioned, but believe me not unappreciated.

So let me conclude with thanks to all of you for making this a fine, fruitful, first year for me -- and with special thanks to our church secretary who has filled so many important gaps in my professional as well as personal life.

June 3, 1975

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Last year at annual meeting time, our society was at the bottom of a slump of magnificent proportions. The Board was wrestling with financial problems which threatened our very existence as a group; a house which needs serious attention both inside and out, and a membership which had hope and the expectations that things would soon be better.

Well, that hope and the expectation began to come true. As we started the new church year in September, I began to sense a buoyancy and excitement, an effervescence, which augured well for our future.

Our serious financial shortfall in last years' budget was weathered by fund-raising events and by dipping into ever dwindling reserves. This year, while we are not yet out of the woods, our financial position is considerably improved so that, if present trends continue, next year should find us in a properly solvent condition again. If that comes to pass we can stop our hand-to-mouth scraping for minimal needs and provide reasonable funds for Religious Education, Adult Program, salaries and building maintenance as well as our fair share to the UUA which has so generously given aid to us.

The house (Parsonage) has had the serious attention, is painted inside and out, and should be totally completed by the end of the month.

In the past few years, we have had net losses in membership and no positive growth. As you will read in your membership committee report, this year we have approximately 30% more signed new members than we have had in losses. And the losses came from deaths and friends moving away.

Nick's leadership has helped us reorganize our talents so that once again we are pulling together as a group with common goals and the energy to accomplish them.

Thank you, Nick, for being willing to leave your nice safe place in Albany to help us tackle our problems successfully and cut them down to size!

Helea Obriest