

Unitarian Universalists for Drug Policy Reform



Annual Report

November 2001

an Independent Affiliate of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Unitarian Universalists for Drug Policy Reform (UUDPR) was incorporated in October 2000. Thanks to the efforts of more than 500 UUs across the continent, UUDPR's first year was remarkably successful.

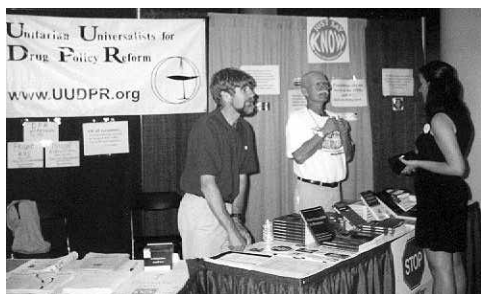
UUDPR has focused primarily on facilitating the congregations' efforts to study the drug issue and develop a comprehensive Statement of Conscience. UUDPR's active participants organized study circles and seminars, distributed literature, delivered sermons, and helped their congregations draft and submit comments to the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

The UUA's first draft of the Statement of Conscience was sent to all congregations this October, and UU delegates will vote on it at General Assembly in June 2002. Excerpts include:

- * "We call for thoughtful consideration and careful implementation of alternatives that regard the reduction of harm as the appropriate standard by which to test drug policies."
- * "Using a drug does not necessarily mean abusing the drug, much less addiction to it."



Deborah Small from the national Lindesmith Center - Drug Policy Foundation and Cliff Thornton from Efficacy speak at UUDPR's GA workshop, "Drug Policy Alternatives: What Are the Options?"



UUDPR's Allen Penticoff and Board member John Chase (left to right) provide information at General Assembly.

- * "Remove criminal penalties for obtaining and using drugs, with drug abusers subject to arrest and imprisonment only if they harm others, and then only for the actual crime committed."

Passing this realistic, compassionate statement will serve to broaden the public debate on this complex and important issue. The complete text may be found through UUDPR's web page at www.uudpr.org.

UUDPR's Activities

- * The high point of UUDPR's first year was the UUA's General Assembly in June 2001. UUDPR organized and ran two well-attended workshops featuring leading experts in the field.

In addition, UUDPR Board president Charles Thomas was a featured speaker at a drug policy workshop run by the UUA's Commission on Social Witness.

UUDPR also ran an exhibit booth, at which we met hundreds of UUs and distributed more than 2,000 pieces of literature.

- * UUDPR has provided free information to countless people through our Web page. Among the many useful features are electronic versions of two UUDPR publications, "What UUs Can Do" and "Discussion Points," located at www.uudpr.org/action.html and www.uudpr.org/discussion.html.
- * UUDPR Board member Rev. Mike Young had an opinion column, "The Drug War's True Failure," published in the November/December 2000 *UU World*.
- * UUDPR Board members Frances Burford and Charles Thomas were quoted in the July/August 2001 *UU World* magazine, in the article, "Churches Look for Alternatives to the Controversial War on Drugs."

"The drug war violates every one of our seven principles."

—UUDPR's Frances Burford in the *UU World* (July/August 2001)

- * UUDPR's Board members and other active participants spoke at dozens of congregations and district meetings. In addition, we helped numerous others find speakers with expertise on a wide range of drug issues.

“Until we begin to formulate nuanced and thoughtful strategies for dealing with drug use, we will continue to distort every aspect of our society, and make the real drug problems worse.”

— UUDPR’s Rev. Mike Young in the *UU World*
(November/December 2000)

- * UUDPR periodically e-mails active participants an electronic newsletter, “UUDPR Updates,” which features news about major drug policy developments, updates on UUDPR’s activities and requests for assistance, and resources and tips on educating the public about the topic.
- * UUDPR regularly responds to requests from UUs and others looking for facts about the War on Drugs and a variety of alternatives. In addition, the UUA’s department of Faith in Action (FIA) directs interested UUs to UUDPR, and we keep FIA abreast of the activities of other organizations in the field.

Upcoming Goals and Activities

To date, most of UUDPR’s activities have been performed voluntarily on a part-time basis by Board president Charles Thomas. In order to maximize our effectiveness, we need a full-time, adequately compensated executive director. Thomas recently left his old job in order to devote full-time hours to UUDPR. Assuming that all goes well, UUDPR will hire Thomas as the executive director this winter.

UUDPR will continue to do all of the aforementioned activities, including workshops and booths at GA 2002. In addition, having a full-time executive director will enable us to do much more. Thomas has spent considerable time during the past few months building a strong infrastructure. Now, with an office and a well-organized database of 500 participants, we are ready to take our message to the general public.

In the near future — especially after the UU delegates pass an excellent Statement of Conscience at GA 2002 — we will frequently be quoted in the news media, have letters-to-the-editor published, do speaking tours and organize seminars, meet with public officials and leaders of other denominations, and otherwise facilitate UUs’ efforts to play a major role in the drug policy reform movement.

Financial Report and Budget

To date, 84 people have made financial contributions to UUDPR. In addition, the UU Funding Program has awarded us a \$5,000 grant and a \$12,000 challenge grant, meaning that we must raise another \$12,000 from other

sources in order to receive the full amount.

More than 400 UUDPR participants have not yet made financial contributions. If each donates \$30, then the \$12,000 challenge will be met. In addition, UUDPR plans to do larger outreach mailings and to solicit grants from major foundations and philanthropists.

Because UUDPR is on the same financial calendar as the UUA, our first fiscal year ended on June 30, 2001, just eight months after we incorporated. Our financial statement for fiscal year 2000-2001 and our budget for the current fiscal year appear below:



UUDPR president Charles Thomas speaks at a district-wide drug policy meeting in Waltham, MA, organized by Board member Karen Klein (right).

Expenses	FY 00-01 (actual)	FY 01-02 (budget)
Administrative	\$388	\$1,520
Salaries	\$0	\$21,010
Equipment/Supplies	\$105	\$350
General Assembly (workshop & booth)	\$1,750	\$3,070
Outreach/Fundraising	\$720	\$8,050
TOTAL	\$2,963	\$34,000
Income		
Individual donations	\$4,693	\$15,700
Sales (books & printed info)	\$833	\$750
Speaker honoraria	\$275	\$600
Grants	\$0	\$17,000
TOTAL	\$5,801	34,050

Conclusion

According to the FBI, more than 1.5 million people are arrested on drug charges in the U.S. each year, more than 75% for personal possession (not dealing). This number is likely to increase, as the drug war is now being lead by hard-line zealots like Attorney General John Ashcroft, DEA Administrator Asa Hutchinson (a Bob Jones University alumnus), and Drug Czar John Walters (a Bill Bennett protégé).

Simultaneously, in many parts of the world, more just and compassionate drug policies are being seriously considered and even implemented, showing that the criminal prohibition of certain drugs is not a sacred cow. More and more nations are courageously breaking out of this cruel, costly, counterproductive paradigm.

Unitarian Universalism is becoming the vanguard religion in this field — but to do it right, UUDPR needs your help! Please contribute today.

“I was alive during alcohol prohibition, and drug prohibition is even more disastrous.”

— UUDPR Board member Allen Powell