

UU's for Jewish Awareness

Rich and Janet had a wonderful time in Atlanta y'all. We want to share our adventures with you. We first read about the event, "Let Us Be Counted! UUs for Jewish Awareness," in our news letter. It was held the weekend of February 18th at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta, the UUCA. The planners were young and energetic graduates of Star King school for Ministry, a UU seminary in Berkley California and UUCA's Reverend Marti Keller. Rev Leah Hart-Landsberg is the President of UUJA and was an inspirational leader for us. All are people who love and are committed to their UUism and also want to preserve the beauty and spirituality of their Jewish childhoods. By celebrating and sharing the mosaic of their lives, they are more fully present in their congregations.

It was a wonderful and affirming weekend experience. We connected with people from all over the country. We recognized the common philosophies and values of Judaism and UUism over music and food, two of our favorite things! We participated in fascinating workshops.

Dr. Ibrahim Abdurrahman Farajaje illustrated how we do not fit into a neat box. He talked of other cultures that have Jewish communities where we would not expect them, such as India and China. We learned about Transylvanian Unitarians who incorporated some Jewish practice hundreds of years ago.

Rev. Debra Haffner of Norwalk Ct led a very interesting workshop on Jewish, Christian, and UU perspectives on sexuality. Rev. Haffner is committed to sexual health in our UU communities. She is involved in the OWL program and would like to see it implemented in congregations from kindergarten. Her lecture described the biblical roots for some of our ideas and values regarding sexuality. She paraphrased St. Augustine when she said, "God give chastity, but not yet."

The soon to be Rev. Dara Kaufman-Ledonne led a workshop entitled Israel-Palestine, roses and thorns. It was at times emotional. Jewish participants came in touch with their feelings of identification with Israel. People expressed a very real fear that if Israel doesn't survive, their personal safety is at risk. With this in mind, hope was expressed that when our beloved leadership attends General Assembly they will take great care regarding proclamations about the Middle East. Language must be measured, not inflammatory. All sides must be considered.

We stayed through a beautiful Sunday service. There was a combined choir, UUCA and the local Synagogue. We sang some beautiful Hebrew songs of unity and peace. The chapel was awe inspiring. Without one religious icon you felt like you were in sacred space. The round shape of the room and high ceilings made you feel connected to the congregation and to a higher power.

Congregates at UUCA opened their homes and provided housing and breakfast. Delicious dinners and lunch were at the Fellowship. Thanks to Atlanta for their warmth and hospitality.

While participating in this very Jewish experience, we felt even more connected to our own UUFLB. We want to thank you, our friends, for allowing us to celebrate all of who we are.

Love, Rich and Janet