

Central Unitarian Church Rejoices in Ordination of Megan Kelly

On Sunday, April 30, 2006, Central Unitarian Church (Paramus NJ) (CUC) ordained Megan McCown Kelly into the UU ministry. Ms. Kelly completed her childhood religious education at CUC, culminating in graduation from the church's Affirmation class, a year-long "coming of age" curriculum for the denomination.

A crowd of more than 200 attended the Ordination ceremony which reverberated with words of praise, soaring music, sober commitment and personal dedication. In the Call to Celebration preceding the ceremony, Herb Ouida, Chair of the Ordination Committee, reminded those gathered that, "Megan is a child of this church, and this ceremony represents the highest possible success of all we have invested in our religious education program and our young people." Since Ms. Kelly is now completing her second year as chaplain at Winthrop University Hospital in Mineola, NY, he explained that, "She has chosen to become a community minister serving as a hospital chaplain. In that role she will support the spiritual needs of patients, friends, family and staff throughout the hospital, including people who are making end-of-life decisions -- a very special calling. Megan," he proclaimed, "is a living example of the congregation's weekly affirmation that 'love is the spirit of this church' and of its covenant 'to help one another.'"



The newly ordained Rev. Megan M. Kelly (left) rejoicing with Rev. Justin Osterman, minister of Central Unitarian Church, following her ordination service. [Photo by Chris Marksbury, CM Photos]

Following the impressive entrance of robed clergy processing to the familiar strains of "Rank by Rank," ministers and laymen who mentored and guided Megan on her path to ministry took part in the Ordination service. These included Rev. Justin Osterman (Minister, Central Unitarian Church, Paramus, NJ), Rev. Valerie Storms (Winthrop University Hospital, Mineola, NY), Tim Ettenheim (Director of Human Services for HealthCare Chaplaincy, NY area), Rev. Harry Green (Metro NY District Congregational Services Consultant), Rev. Paul Ratzlaff (Metro New York Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association President), Rev. Alison Cornish (UU Fellowship of Bellport and UU Congregation of South Fork, L.I., NY), Rev. Catherine Torpey (South Nassau UU Church, Freeport, NY), Rev. Marta Flanagan (Minister Emeritus, South Church, Portsmouth, NH), Rev. Jennifer Brower (Minister of Pastoral Care, Shelter Rock Congregation, Manhasset, NY), Claire Phillips-Thorn (Harvard Divinity School, final year student) and Rev. William Feinberg (Chaplain/Spiritual Care Coordinator, Hospice Care Network, Woodbury, NY).

CUC President, Lisa Horton, led the congregation in the Act of Ordination. Music for the service was provided by Scott Ward, (Honorary Minister of Music, First Unitarian Society of Wilmington, DE), baritone soloist David Cryer (a Teaneck resident, CUC member and longtime family friend) and violinist Suzy Perelman (professional musician and teacher at Lucy Moses School in Manhattan). Several members of the current CUC

Youth Group willingly gave up an afternoon to serve as ushers. At the conclusion of the service, guests took part in a gala reception celebrating the, now official, Reverend Megan McCown Kelly.

After graduating from Northern Valley Regional High School in Demarest in 1993, Rev. Kelly attended Connecticut College in New London, CT, where she majored in Religious Studies and graduated with honors and distinction in that major. She went on to Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, MA, and received her Masters in Divinity (MDiv) in 2003. During the academic year of 2000-2001, she was the fulltime Intern Minister at South Church Unitarian Universalist in Portsmouth, NH. She spent the summer of 2003 serving as an intern chaplain at Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, MA, and she subsequently completed three units of a residency in Clinical Pastoral Education at UCLA Medical Center in Westwood and Santa Monica, CA.

Although she is the first woman ordained by Central Unitarian Church, she is the second graduate of the Religious Education program to enter the ministry. The first was Daniel Kanter, formerly of Teaneck, who currently serves as settled minister at the First Unitarian Church in Dallas, Texas.