

[NYSCU Annual Session 1826]

Minutes
of the Universalist Convention

The Delegates from the several Associations composing the Universalist Convention of the State of New York assembled agreeably to appointment at Madison in the County of Madison, in said State, on the second Wednesday of May, 1826; after addressing the throne of grace by Br. A. Kneeland, proceeded to organize the Council by appointing

1. Br. A. Kneeland, President.
2. Br. N. Stacy, Secretary.

3. Received a communication from a Convocation of Ministers holden at Utica, the 6th inst., through the medium of their committee, recommending an alteration of the first article of the Constitution of this body, together with other things, whereupon,

4. Voted to take the recommendation presented by the aforesaid Convocation into serious consideration.

5. The first resolution recommended as above, having undergone several amendments, was finally adopted as follows:

Resolved, that the following be, and hereby is substituted and adopted as the first article of the Constitution of this Convention.

Article 1st. This Convention shall be composed exclusively of delegates consisting of ordained ministers of good standing to be chosen annually from each Association now existing, or which may hereafter be formed, within the State of New York, or such other Associations as may wish to come under its jurisdiction, provided each Association have [sic] the privilege of sending five delegates, and five of said delegates when duly assembled shall form a quorum to transact business.

6. Voted, that the further consideration of the above recommendations from the Convocation &c. be referred to a committee of three, to report thereon; and appointed Brs. Kneeland, [William] Underwood and [Seth] Jones the above committee.

7. [This number was omitted, apparently inadvertently.]

8. Voted to appoint a Standing Clerk and Treasurer for this Convention; and appointed Br. N. Stacy to these offices.

9. Adjourned till after the public services, then to meet at the house of Br. Coe.

10. After the public services, the council having convened at Br. Coe's, proceeded to business.

11. The Committee to whom was referred the communication from the Convocation &c. reported several resolutions which after undergoing some amendments, were adopted as follows:

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12. Resolved, that this Convention hereby recommend to all the Associations in connexion herewith, that all societies received or to be received into fellowship of any association belonging to this Convention be organized agreeably to the statutes of the respective states in which said societies may be located, as is therein provided, and that they also make all due and reasonable exertions to support the ministry of the Gospel according to their respective abilities; and recommend to all churches now in fellowship or which may hereafter be received in to fellowship to attend to the ordnance of baptism or dedication and the Lord's Supper as tending to promote the good order of our respective churches.

13. That no candidate for the ministry shall be entitled to a letter of fellowship from any association in this connexion until he shall have obtained a competent knowledge of the common branches of English Literature, and devoted at least one year exclusively to the study of Theology, unless it shall appear to the committee whose duty it shall be to examine such candidate, that he have [sic] already obtained a competent knowledge of the above business, and also such other qualifications as the gospel requires.

14. That the several Associations appoint a visiting Committee, to visit the several churches and Societies within the limits of their respective jurisdictions previous to the next annual meeting of their respective bodies, with suitable instructions to inquire into the state of said churches and societies, ascertain their numbers, ability and disposition to support the cause of truth, recommend such things as in their opinion will tend to promote the interests of said churches and societies, and render a minute report of such visit at the next regular or annual meeting of the said Association.

15. Voted to add the following article to the Constitution, viz. Article 8th. All propositions to alter or amend this Constitution in future shall be submitted in writing at one annual meeting of the Convention, and voted upon at the next succeeding meeting; and the votes of two thirds of the members shall be necessary to adopt the same.

16. Voted to appoint a committee of discipline consisting of three members, Brs. Kneeland, Underwood and Stacy were appointed the above committee.

17. Appointed Br. A. Kneeland to prepare for the press the minutes of this convention together with the proceedings of the convocation at Utica, and to accompany the same as a circular letter.

18. Adjourned the Convention to meet at Utica in the State of New York on the second Wednesday of May, 1827.

Prayer by Br. J. S. Thompson.

A. Kneeland	President
N. Stacy	Secretary

Remarks.

It was probably thought by the members and friends of the Convention that the resolutions and proceedings could obviate the objections existing against the body. But it seems they did not, but rather increased them than otherwise. For the opponents of the Convention (themselves being clergymen) complained that, instead of diminishing clerical power and influence it vastly increased both by increasing the number of ministers & still excluding laymen from all share or participation in the proceedings of the Convention. They also complained that they were not invited by circular to the convocation as others had been—that the attempt to have a learned ministry & a powerful and controlling [sic] clerical body was but a dangerous attempt to imitate other aspiring denominations of professed Christians, & many other charges of a similar character. And from the spirit manifested by one or two of the ministers composing the convocation & Convention of 1826, perhaps there was sufficient ground given for those complaints & apprehensions, or some of them at least.

Another convocation of ministers was held at Clinton, Oneida County in July of this year with a view of reconciling the differences of opinion among the friends and enemies of the Convention, both of which were invited to attend. But they parted without any more harmony of feeling or action apparently than they had when they met.

D. S. [Dolphus Skinner]

Utica Convocation.

After much deliberation relative to the affairs of their Societies in this section of the country which profess faith in the "common salvation" on the 7th of April a circular letter signed by Messrs. Thompson, Lisher and Jones was addressed to a number of brethren in the Ministry of Reconciliation, the purpose of which was as follows:

Dear brother, your attendance is most respectfully requested at a Convocation of Ministers to be held at Utica on Saturday the Sixth, Sab. the Seventh, and Monday the eighth of May next, to consult the most effectual means of obtaining uniformity of Discipline and Cooperation among our Societies; and of obviating objections to the plan of the Universalist Convention. Pursuant to the request and appointment of the above circular, a respectable number of Universalist Ministers assembled in Utica, on May 6th, 1826, at the house of Br. John S. Thompson, and organized a council,

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by choosing Br. A. [Abner] Kneeland Chairman and G. [George] B. Lisher Clerk. During the three days of session of this Convocation public worship was held in the Court House & 6 discourses preached by Brs. G. Messinger, G. B. Lisher, T. [Thomas] F. King, L. C. Todd & A. Kneeland; and the Eucharist administered at the close of the morning service on Sunday.

The Convocation sat in Council during three days and after considerable consultation and deliberation, several resolutions were passed, one of which recommended to the Universalist Convention to be holden at Madison, to alter the first article of their Constitution so as to embrace "all regular ordained ministers, pursuing their official duties, and holding the fellowship of any Association uniting in said Convention," two others relative to the organization of Societies [and] the qualifications of candidates for the ministry, to entitle them to receive the fellowship of the Associations; and a fourth recommended the appointment of a committee to visit the Churches and Societies within the limits of their connexion.

Appointed Brs. Lisher, Miles & Thompson a committee to present the proceedings of this meeting to the Convention, and to use all laudable exertions to procure their adoption.

Transcribed from an image of the original record with notes added
in Jan 2013 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY