

A Historical Retrospective

Florida Students of the Urantia Book

"To Infinity and Beyond!" Buzz Lightyear



The Florida Students of The Urantia Book (FSUB) has evolved over the last thirty-plus years through the hard work and dedication of its members. In the mid-1970's, there were only a few Urantia Book study groups in Florida. Following the excitement of a triennial meeting in Chicago, Florida readers Steve Law and David Glass set out to collect names of readers throughout the state.

David drove all across Florida visiting occult bookstores that carried The Urantia Book. He placed cards in each book, asking readers for their names and addresses. This first mailing list quickly grew to include almost 120 people. The Messenger, the first statewide newsletter, was created to help these readers stay in touch and find other readers in their area.

The first state conference was held in November 1975 at the Unity Church in Tampa. Readers came from all over Florida and a few from out of state as well. About sixty people attended this gathering, thanks in part to a list of readers provided by the Urantia Foundation. Some of these early attendees are still very active in Urantia Book activities and will be roaming the halls of this year's FSUB Memorial Day weekend conference.

Other conferences followed. From the Franciscan Center and a Fundamentalist Christian retreat facility to a 4-H camp and the campus of the University of South Florida, conferences have been held throughout the state. Often alternating the hosting responsibilities, the Gold and the Gulf Coasts have held twenty-five conferences in the last twenty-six years.

By the early 1980s, The Messenger had a mailing list of over 350 readers and conferences were featuring speakers from all over the country. It was during this time of growth that the Tampa groups decided to apply for "Urantia Society" status. After several false starts, it became apparent that this would be best accomplished by combining the East and West coast readers.

In 1987 at the conference held at a 4-H camp near Sebring, the group agreed to apply to become the First Urantia Society of Florida. The following year at the Methodist retreat center in Leesburg (where the conference has been held until 2007), officers were elected, DeDe Robertson being the first president.

Before the new Florida Society had affiliated with the national organization, the situation between the Foundation and the Brotherhood became critical. The eventual split in Chicago caused problems within the new Society in Florida. Politics became an issue.

Which side would the group choose to affiliate with? There was much heated discussion and concern for the survival of this new association.

At the second conference at Leesburg, representatives from The Urantia Foundation and The Urantia Brotherhood came to discuss issues of contention with the Florida group. What was intended to be a two-hour business meeting turned into a two-day challenge to our unity. In the end, Florida Urantia Book readers decided to continue with their incorporation, but would remain unaffiliated, independent and apolitical. Papers were filed in 1990 by second President Daniel Amyx, to incorporate in Florida as a nonprofit organization, and with the IRS for 501(c)(3) status, making donations to the organization tax deductible.

In the years following the division of the Foundation and the Brotherhood (later to emerge as the Fellowship), the group experienced a drop in membership and attendance at the statewide conferences, due in part to disillusionment with events in Chicago. At one point, Tom French held several offices, including President. His dedication was instrumental in maintaining group unity.

Though time may not heal all wounds, the memory of them tends to fade. And with the passing of time, attendance at conferences has been steadily increasing. Our Florida groups are working more closely and creating greater unity of purpose, either despite or because of our many differences. (membership is not restricted to Florida residents)

Some of our members are affiliated individually with the Urantia Foundation, others are supporters of the Urantia Fellowship and some "choose not to choose." Regardless of individual political alliances, we have found unity in our associations with other Urantia Book Readers within FSUB and with study groups in and outside of our state. We are here to study The Urantia Book, to associate with other Urantia Book readers, and to spread its teachings.

We enjoy the diversity of our members. The Urantia Book tells us over and over that we must find unity in our diversity, that we must be tolerant and that we must love each other even as our Father loves us. FSUB is our attempt to follow these mandates and to overcome the obstacles placed before us by unifying with other Urantia Book readers, and to grow and become better people, teachers, and parents by our association with like-minded truth-seekers.

Florida Students of the Urantia Book (FSUB) is a diverse nonpartisan community dedicated to living the teachings of Jesus as revealed in The Urantia Book. The path to divinity is one of progressive spirituality.

We, as members of FSUB, have chosen spiritual unity in loving service as the means by which we do the will of God on earth. We value unity and respect diversity of background and viewpoint. We acknowledge the moral dignity of each person. In this community, we foster individual growth by serving in cooperative teams. We encourage participants to contribute new ideas, to strive for ideals, and to live the truth.