

**Citation for Richard S. Gilbert**  
Degree of Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa  
Commencement Ceremony, June 4, 2006

Social justice activist, preacher, writer, community leader and religious educator, you have dedicated your life's ministry seeking to change the world and to encourage other Unitarian Universalists to do the same.

Born a Universalist, you graduated from St. Lawrence University in 1958 and received your Master of Divinity degree from St. Lawrence Theological School in 1961 where you studied with Angus MacLean, the Dean and professor of religious education. You were ordained in 1961 just as the consolidation that formed the Unitarian Universalist Association occurred. You served churches in Ithaca, New York and Cleveland, Ohio before beginning your 32-year tenure in 1970 as Parish Minister of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester, New York. In 1977 you received your Doctor of Ministry from Colgate Rochester Divinity School. In 1985, Starr King School for the Ministry awarded you an honorary doctorate and just last month, your alma mater, St. Lawrence University honored you with its honorary doctorate.

Praised as “no mere theoretician,” former UUA president, John Buehrens has remarked, “He is, and has been throughout an exemplary ministry of nearly forty years, a practitioner of the faith he advocated: publicly engaged religious leadership, seeking to help create what Dr. Martin Luther King called ‘the Beloved Community’ for us all.”

Your published works include:

- Numerous op-ed contributions to area newspapers;
- A UU meditation manual entitled *In the Holy Quiet of this Hour*;
- Numerous articles including the chapter “Useable Truth” published in *Essex Conversations: Visions for Lifespan Religious Education*;
- Two books, *The Prophetic Imperative: Social Gospel in Theory and Practice* and *How Much Do We Deserve? An Inquiry into Distributive Justice*; and
- The extremely popular adult religious education resource entitled, *Building Your Own Theology*.

Among your many community and interfaith involvements you have been chair of the peace, justice and human rights committee of the International Association for Religious Freedom; president of the governing board of Interfaith IMPACT of New York State; advisory panel member of the Rochester Area Community Foundation; convener of the Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam; and program director of the Unirondack Summer Institute. You received the Angus H. MacLean Award in 1984 for your outstanding contributions to Unitarian Universalist religious education and the Sol Feinstone Award For Humanitarian Service in 1998 from St. Lawrence University. At your retirement in 2002, the First Church of Rochester created “The Gilbert Spirit Fund – To Be is To Be for Others,” a social justice endowment fund in honor of you and your wife, Joyce Gilbert.

Among the many worship resources you have authored are these words,

Life is too transient to be cruel to one another,  
It is too short for thoughtlessness,  
Too brief for hurting.  
Life is long enough for caring,  
It is lasting enough for sharing,  
Precious enough for love.  
Be gentle with one another.

Richard S. Gilbert, husband of Joyce, father of Matthew and Douglas, mentor, leader, dedicated advocate for justice and the common good, we honor you today for your service, for your steadfast energy, for your prodding of each of us to take our social responsibility most seriously, and for your vision.