

Report to the Board on the April 2011 General Assembly Planning Committee (GAPC) Meeting

The GAPC met April 7-10, 2011 in Charlotte, North Carolina, the site of the 2011 General Assembly. The meeting included a tour of the convention centers and meetings with local ministers and congregation leaders, the GA volunteer committee, and youth caucus leaders. Conference calls were held with UUA President Peter Morales, Vice President for Ministries and Congregational Support Harlan Limpert, the GA Accountability Group, and UUA Moderator Gini Courter. Plans for GA 2011 are progressing well, with many opportunities to celebrate the first 50 years of our Association of Unitarian Universalist Congregations as we look forward to our next 50 years.

Registration. As of early April, registration for GA was 1,429 with attendance projected at 4,200. Attendance has not been over 4,000 since Portland in 2007. Additional hotels are being booked because all the original hotels were filled within the first three weeks of registration.

Site for GA 2015. The GAPC is recommending that the Board of Trustees approve Portland, Oregon as the site for GA 2015. (See attached report.)

GA Feedback. The GAPC reviewed items for the post-GA survey form to be posted online for GA attendee feedback. New items will include intention to attend GA 2012 with space for comment, use of new electronic access, and reasons for deciding to attend GA 2011.

Conference call with Peter Morales. A conference call with President Morales and Dea Brayden included discussion of arrangements for special GA 2011 speakers such as Imam Rauf and Ware lecturer Karen Armstrong; whether the Board will request a special collection during plenary and, if so, its timing; scheduling of Stewardship and Development receptions; and a memo containing senior staff's criteria and recommendations for GA 2012.

Offsite participation. The GAPC discussed the implications of offsite delegate participation for onsite plenary management. Concerns will be shared with the offsite planning team.

AR/AO/MC statement. The GAPC reviewed a draft AR/AO/MC statement that had never been finalized. The committee decided to consider the statement at the GAPC's retreat in September to include new committee members.

GA 2012. Because plans for GA 2011 are progressing so well, the GAPC had time to discuss at length what GA 2012 might look like. The proposed focus would be on education, tool making, training, action, and worship. The aim is to prepare attendees to engage in justice actions in Phoenix and in their own congregations when they return home. Promoting GA 2012 attendance to varied audiences will require multiple media

including a brochure, answers to Frequently Asked Questions, workshops at 2011, a booth in the Exhibit Hall, and strategies not yet imagined. Lynda Shannon, GAPC chair, together with several other members of the GAPC, will join the Board on Saturday night to expand on GAPC plans for addressing the GAMAP vision that the Board voted at its October 2010 meeting. A question for the Board is how it will operationalize GA plenaries “in which business is limited to the minimum required by our bylaws.”

Tour of convention center. The convention center is attractive. A light rail bisects the second floor, which complicates access but is being addressed. The Board’s room will be Studio 103 in the convention center.

Conference call with Harlan Limpert. The conversation with Harlan Limpert addressed the need for the Program Development Group to prepare differently for GA 2012, including the need to involve youth and youth adults, and how staff will address accessibility to ensure that all people who want to participate will have the option of doing so.

Meeting with 2011 Youth Caucus Staff. The youth wanted to know whether there would be a gender-neutral bathroom at GA 2011 (yes), what the public witness event and evening programs would be, how GA addresses sustainability, and how youth can get involved in helping to make GA a success.

Conference call with GA Accountability Group (GAAG). Four members of the GAAG participated in the call, which was joined by Moderator Gini Courter. Lynda Shannon, GAPC chair, summarized some of the GAPC’s thoughts for GA 2012. Leslie Takahashi-Morris, GAAG chair, said that she felt that what Lynda had summarized as possibilities for GA 2012 captured the spirit of a Justice GA. She liked the concept of learning, action, reflection and worship, and expressed the hope that there would be even more worship. Discussion included plans for the GAPC and GAAG to meet at GA 2011; the need to dispel myths surrounding plans for GA 2012, which the FAQs will address; the need for an expanded role for the Right Relations Team and an increased number of chaplains at GA 2012; the need for the UUMA to engage ministers in positive messaging and to assist with developing inspiring, healing worship. At the end of the conversation, Gini observed that, although there are still many unanswered questions, the GAAG had responded positively to GAPC proposals. She noted that congregations can begin now to educate themselves in preparation for GA 2012. She was also supportive of initiating grid development early and involving a broad range of stakeholders.

As I end my role as Board liaison to the GAPC, I want to express my admiration and appreciation for committee members’ and GACS staff’s hard work and dedication to producing engaging, inspiring annual gatherings that promote our congregations’ capacity and commitment to work for justice and engage in shared ministries.

Respectfully submitted,
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Trustee, Ballou Channing District