

District Presidents Association Meeting
June 25, 2014
Biltmore Hotel Renaissance Room, Providence, RI

Present:

Ballou Channing District

Ms. MaryLu Love
Ms. Janet Richardi (outgoing)

Clara Barton District

Ms. Justine Sullivan

Florida District

Ms. Margie Manning
Ms. Ila Klion (outgoing)

Joseph Priestley District

Ms. Lillian Christman

Massachusetts Bay District

Ms. Laura Graham

Metro New York District

Ms. Mia Morse

MidAmerica Region

Rev. Bill Sasso

Mid-South District

Ms. DeAnn Peterson

Mountain Desert District

Mr. Victor Ashear
Ms. Marcia Bowman (outgoing)

Northern New England District

Ms. Dana Baron
Mr. Charles Boethby (outgoing)

Ohio-Meadville District

Rev. Matt Alspaugh
Mr. David Petras (outgoing)

Pacific Central District

Ms. Judy Young

Pacific Northwest District

Ms. Carrie Krause
Ms. Carol McKinley (outgoing)

Pacific Southwest District

Ms. Alicia Davis

Southeast District

Ms. Denise Rimes

Southwestern District

Mr. Mark Anderson
Mr. Kevin Bolton (outgoing)

St. Lawrence District

Mr. Jeff Donahue

Unitarian Universalist Association

Rev. Scott Tayler

Call to Order at 8:35 AM by President Kevin Bolton.

Worship led by Justine Sullivan.

Kevin Bolton recited the DPA mission and led review of agenda.

Process observer: Marcia Bowman

- UUA Board report – Kevin Bolton
 - UUA staff announced the projected budget will be short by 1.5 million, 7% of budget. Peter Morales said they will take a month to figure this out. Staff not to act precipitously. There were projections on the revenue that included large gifts that did not materialize. The board wants a revised budget by Aug. 1 and will review at 2016 budget year with staff. They asked president to investigate what led to such a shortfall. The board and finance committee to review this issue; don't want to dip into reserves. They are saving money on the move from Beacon Street to Farnsworth. Moderator Jim Key says this isn't related to divestiture. They believe it's a one-time mistake, not recurring.
- Introductions: Who are we & who we represent; what we get from DPA; what we would like to get from the DPA.
- Installation of new DPA members
- Regionalization Panel:
 - Denise Rimes, Southern Region
 - Started 4 years ago when they created the Orlando Platform.
 - Fall 2013; how to operationalize the Orlando Platform.
 - They wanted to get rid of the middle judicatory. Staff was well ahead of lay leaders with regionalization.
 - Pursue consolidating the four district boards in favor of a fiduciary council for assets; council/work team on the legal consolidation; team on elder-hood; team on clusters.
 - Goal: April 2015 to have 4 boards vote on dissolution in favor of Southern Region
 - Bill Sasso, MidAmerica Region
 - There were 3 districts.
 - August 2012, the 3 boards met with staff and committed to form a region and dissolve the districts by April 2013, which they did. GA 2013 recognized MidAmerica as a new region.
 - Camp UniStar will be its own entity.
 - Extensively used lawyers this year with the legal dissolution of the districts.
 - The new regional board is acting like a Congregational Life Advisory Council.
 - Judy Young, Pacific Western Region
 - Pacific Central was last district to consider collaboration, not a region.
 - A combined regional assembly was well received.
 - Regional collaboration task force. One team working on agreements; another on how they're going to work together. Communications team, looking at educational materials to help congregations get their questions answered. Finance Committee -- the districts are now using the same bookkeeping model.
 - All agreed on covenant.

- They voted to value & pay attention to what comes out of this task force.
 - Best part so far is monthly meetings with presidents and the staff working together.
 - Challenge or opportunity: holding on can be a blessing or a curse.
- Laura Graham, New England Region
 - 4 districts; no plans to dissolve districts' structure.
 - Each district board discerning what their future will be like.
 - Each has a fiduciary responsibility, but there won't be a judiciary between them & UUA. The UUA will be empowered and accountable. The power is at the UUA rather than district board.
 - Staff is managed by UUA, not district. District leaders to lift up the ministries they want to offer; that's the role of the districts. No governance at district level.
- Lillian Christman, Central East Regional Group
 - Draft plan is to be done after GA and then distributed to the four boards.
 - Some of these districts are working w/Scott on a new unified staff plan.
 - JPD just hired Rev. David Pyle as new District Executive.
- Discussion:
 - How did MidAmerica manage the anxiety & trepidation within district boards? They tried to do sessions at district meetings. They had working groups - lots of communications out to ministers, LREDA, etc. so their new proposal was coming and had high-level rationale. They recognized that there were efficiencies. They're still not sure what the new services are that could come about as a result of regionalization. Draft bylaws, 8 pages, were up on web site for 30 days; got 28 pages of comments!
 - New England: used DA to role out the year of discernment about what to do with regionalization. They felt they needed meaningful feedback. They were very honest & clear with their constituents. Talked about history, redundancies, etc. Staff largely drove regionalization.
 - Why did JPD hire another District Executive? The UUA wanted the outgoing DE to be a Congregational Life Consultant. Bylaws say they'll have a DE and the board is accountable to their congregations by acting as fiduciary agents and have the power to fire the DE. The DE is central to how the district works. JPD acknowledged they're in transition, decided to hire someone help with the transition. New DE is still co-employed. JPD contributes to the CERG staff and has lots of district staff.
 - How are congregations involved in this process? Is the cost of maintaining multiple organizations worth it or can we reach some efficiencies on regionalization, including volunteer time? Regional leaders did road show to let people know what's happening at

cluster meetings. Web site was updated with how people could be involved. Regions still need money from congregations. Congregations were told at Mass Bay they have to maintain their contributions to the district & the UUA. Judy Young: congregations don't feel threatened. JPD board talk with their congregations as a result of policy governance, they talk about visioning with congregations rather than specifically discussing regionalization. Youth & young adults are likely the most vulnerable in this process.

- Waterfire Activity, Alex Kapitan, UUA Congregational Advocacy & Witness Program Coordinator
 - Theme of GA is Love Reaches Out. This public witness event is a way to practice love reaching out. Taking it to the public sphere. This is a riverfront festival, to draw attention to the arts. Light fires around the river, music, and community arts. UUA is sponsoring this Saturday's festival.
 - DPA will act as marshals. 16 of us volunteered. Wear yellow Standing on Side of Love t-shirts. We'll get red armbands. Meet at UUA Expressway/Welcoming Congregation, outside exhibit hall to get red bands. Be at worship 7:30 - 8:15 on Saturday. Show up at 7:15 & find head usher, Marlene Brown. Each person pair up with an usher in Dunkin Doughnuts Center; walk with that group out of building with luminaria to place at water/reflection area.
- Scott Tayler
 - 3 sections: looking back (gratitude), looking closely at what we can do together; looking ahead - what we can work on together when regionalization is done.
 - Looking back
 - New England's generosity: Mass Bay & Clara Barton togetherness. These 2 merged together, but it was uneven in terms of resources. Yet, they talked about how each could help. They freed up staff to serve the region better. Very generous spirit.
 - "Faithify" Crowdsourcing -- created to support innovation for the entire UUA.
 - CERG: Partnership -- The JPD DE job description was quite long, but the openness of JPD board to include everyone's perspective to partner with the UUA. MNY & JPD have dealt w/staff issues.
 - Pacific West: Focus on stakeholders -- all conversations include connections to our congregations. Very clear on details and not letting things slide.
 - Southern: Balance between big ideas and mighty minutia. Kirk likes to think about regionalization from a faith perspective.
 - MidAmerica: Openness. Relentlessness. They keep offering themselves as guinea pigs. They always want to try something new. They are very generous.
 - Looking Closely

Executive Session: 1:00 - 1:25 pm

- Susan Weaver, UUA Board Trustee & Linkage Liaison; lawyer from San Diego
 - Linkage: last October set a 2 year agenda. How to strengthen GA to meet all the goals? What do we most hear need to hear from congregations? Board met in January; didn't have clear message on GA issue. Sessions at this GA on accessibility, governance, inclusivity. Reached out to 7 groups, voices often marginalized. Transforming Governance group is hoping to have ideas from GA this year about how to make GA better. Broad linkage effort this Fall. Districts will be asked for help identifying congregations who should have conversations with the Transforming Governance group. Due to differences among districts, its challenging to do this congregational identification. Nov. 1 - Dec. 15: ask districts to identify issues. How do districts or regions want to participate in this? By Sept. 1 send a list of congregations by region, then Board will review and identify 20 congregations who would be helpful to talk with. Her team will send out packet of instructions on how to do these meetings. Could be done electronically.
 - How will the board do linkage & how could the DPA help? Board is looking to engage with congregations & other groups. Strongest roles of districts are identifying the best people to talk with, and identify the people who could be developed. But are we likely to identify people who aren't suffering from the problems of GA? Her group is reaching out to other groups that aren't already engaged in GA. Off-site participation is not really the answer. A few years ago there was a joint effort between DPA and UUA board to identify the main problems with GA. They identified the issues, but didn't get to the problem solving side. Mass Bay & Clara Barton districts made it clear in the last year they don't do the work of the UUA. The districts are not a governing body. How do our districts want to be involved in these conversations? Southern region is considering one of their Elder groups to serve in this capacity of identifying congregations. Laura thinks it's better to be clear it's the UUA asking for this help, not the district/region. Matt: The Advisory Council with the DCL is different linkage than either the Elders or what Mass Bay and Clara Barton is thinking. Need to keep clear distinction between operations & governance. Need to find the people to work on linkage are people with good listening skills, technology skills.
- Betsy Gabriel, UUA Compensation Programs Manager, and Richard Nugent, Church Staff Finances Director
 - Fair Compensation Program: Resource for congregations; salary administration program on how to pay & provide benefits. In 1995 UUA discovered that our ministers were very poorly paid compared to other denominations and their benefits were about 50% of other denominations. Recommendation to create this Fair Compensation program was approved at GA without amendment.
 - Fair compensation is a social justice issue. Three major elements: salary

recommendations - pay range for each job description to match your with your employees. Geo indices -- your local pay rate compared to national rates. The geo indices represent the cost of wages in your area. Cost of living and cost of wages are not always the same. There are 7 categories, each with 7% difference between them. Salary recommendations for each geo index. These are salary ranges that are fairly broad with 6 church sizes. Staff is developing HR functions to advise this department. Benefits recommendations are also included.

- Projects: Developing an employee census. They'll get info to be sure we're in compliance with federal law and to identify congregations who are fairly compensating their staff. Update salaries every year. What constitutes fair compensation hasn't been reviewed in 20 years. Will work with independent professional consultant, then task force will redefine fair compensation.
- Need a few more compensation consultants, Southern, Pacific, and CERG in southern area. She's provided a job description.
- This group is available to answer insurance questions, even if outside the UUA plan. They're monitoring the affordable care act.
- Retirement plan: major revision is underway -- first major change in 25 years. Yesterday he had 415 out of 650 congregations respond to new program -- deadline was June 30, but has been extended to Sept. 30. If congregation doesn't respond by then, TIAA-CREF won't accept. Letter announcing program didn't go out to districts by accident.
- Ministerial aid funds are also managed by Richard Nugent's office. If we hear of congregational staff struggling due to various issues, let his office know.
- Rev. Vail Weller, Congregational Giving Director, and Norrie Gall, Annual Program Fund Assistant
 - 3 things: introduction; summary of current FY; pachyderms
 - Vail believes passionately about people aligning their resources with their values. Goal of religious life to grow in trust & generosity. UU principles are the touchstones we center our lives on. We have the 2nd highest earning income of all denominations, but dead last in giving to our own faith. Lots of ways to improve this. Our covenant works both ways: UUA to congregations and congregations to UUA. Her expectation is congregations will support our larger faith.
 - Current year: 1049 congregations -- if all contributed full amount, we'd have 9.3 million dollars. This year's goal is 6.5 million we're 95% there and expect to make the goal. Only 637 congregations pledged this year. Need help spreading the word on the need for pledging. UUA distributed district grants in excess of \$600,000.

GIFT Program (Generously Investing for Tomorrow): District presidents could have been better included. Congregations are pledging 7% of certified congregations' expenditures with some exclusions for UUA and district/region. This will provide the same level of service as in the past. Earlier in the year the request was smaller, 5%, then moved to 7%. For 56% of congregations,

the 7% was the same fair share amount as the previous year. Many congregations, who were not experiencing higher fair share amounts, opted to pledge at the lower rate. Preliminary lessons learned from pilot:

- Making changes to funding structure has serious consequences to whole UUA. Better to move slowly. Roles need to be clarified. Data needs to be collected and shared with the same software. Need people on each team who are proficient with the software. Course corrections made along the way. Need better conversations with the ministers and other major stakeholders. Neither the UUA nor a region can make the ask on their own.
- Cambridge platform: it calls on congregations to come together for a variety of situations. How might we better work congregation-to-congregation on stewardship? Great difference of giving with large congregations. The role of funding in our faith is essential at the district/regional level. Need to build our partnership. Change is difficult!
- Elephants in the room:
 - Need better collaboration with us.
 - Need more support from us.
 - UUs tend to be a bit opinionated -- would like to transform this culture.
 - National rollout: will GIFT be forced on the nation? No plan yet -- only completing first year. Congregations want a unified ask between district & UUA and the rate based on a percentage of expenses rather than a head count. We want to implement plan carefully. Generosity is local.
 - This summer working on regional readiness plan ... best practices on fund raising at regional level.
 - She wants to work more closely with us.
 - Need to create new models around relationship building regarding the dissolution of the APF committee.
 - How can we support congregations who do fundraising? Helping them fund raise, could help the congregations see the bigger picture. The more they raise for themselves, the closer they get to sharing more funds with APF.
 - Problem with many congregations who want to be fair share with district/region but not UUA.
 - Southern region's districts used to be about 80% full fair share, but this year it's 68% as of a week ago. 42 congregations were asked to pledge less than the year before: instead of asking for 7%, they had the option to pledge 5%.
 - We're at 95% of our goal due to a realistic goal and good relationship building among large congregations.

Concluded general meeting and began Business Meeting at 3:25 PM.