

FROM THE VIRTUAL DESK OF GINI COURTER

October 5, 2010

Friends:

I think October came early this year. Like, wasn't it just a couple of weeks ago we were in Minneapolis at General Assembly? It will be so very good to see each and all of you in Boston next week. This is a longer cover letter than usual. A lot has happened over the summer and early fall – some things completed, some not yet. Rather than reporting orally, I'm including my updates in this letter.

OUR MEETING:

We'll have new folks with us during the meeting. **Terasa Cooley** will be with us on Friday morning to talk about what's going on in districts and what comes next. (**John Sanders**, Northern New England District President and new DPA President will also be with us for this conversation.) On Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, we'll spend time with Appreciative Inquiry guru **Amanda Trosten-Bloom**, who will share a plan she developed after a conversation with Peter Morales and me on engaging our congregations in values and vision work. **Susan Radwan** will be with us on Thursday afternoon to help us improve our governance expertise. And of course, this is Youth Observer **Caleb Raible Clark's** first full meeting with the UUA Board. We'll spend Wednesday evening in worship, reflection, and discussion. The Welcoming Team has planned an event for Thursday evening. Friday evening we'll have dinner together but the evening is free. Having dinner in is cheaper than dinner out (unless we all go out for pizza). Saturday evening is designated for the budget hearing and work groups that we'll create during our meeting – but first we'll have our annual Thanksgiving dinner. Nancy Bartlett's asked for guitars, and I hear we'll also have drums, but I don't know what they're for. It's a mystery.

BUSINESS FOR GA 2011/2012

Please note time on Friday (3:50 – 5:00 pm) to try to get a handle on the business items we anticipate placing on the GA agenda in 2011 and 2012. We need to figure out what is "minimal business" for 2012, knowing that some of that will drive the business in 2011. Here is a start for our brainstorming:

- Article XV revision
- Bylaw changes to the AIW process (coming from CSW)
- Bylaw changes to Responsive Resolution process
- Implement new nomination processes for Moderator (if you're nominating candidates in 2012, what is conversation with delegates in 2011?)
- Bylaw changes on method for electing trustees (coming from taskforce)

What else does our Association need us to bring to delegates for conversation or debate/vote in the next 2 years? An honest conversation about the costs – financial and otherwise -- of a national office in Boston as opposed to Kansas City? Atlanta? Fill in the city of your choice here: _____ . (If not now, when?)

COMMUNICATIONS

We tried this in April, and we're trying it again.¹ At noon on Sunday we'll figure out what the top 5-6 communication items are coming out of this meeting. We'll do that very efficiently because each of us will note their top 3 items and have them ready for that noontime discussion. (At least that's the theory.) When we return from lunch, we'll figure out who will write a brief piece on each topic. We'll also do this efficiently because trustees will willingly volunteer, with some trustees getting so excited about this that they'll write their piece(s) during lunch. (At least that's the theory.)

UPDATES:

DPA MEETING TEAM

Thanks to all who considered being part of the Board team meeting with the DPA, which will be all day on Friday, November 5. Here are the folks I have asked to attend, in addition to **Joan Lund**, our liaison: **Nancy Bartlett**, **John Blevins**, and **Linda Laskowski**. John Blevins started this conversation with the DPA 3 years ago, Linda is working on linkage issues with the DPA, and Nancy Bartlett provides continuity from last year and going forward.

TRANSFORMING GOVERNANCE – BOARD SIZE TASKFORCE

Thanks to all for suggestions and volunteerism. I've already asked the trustees who I hope will lead this effort and contacted DRUUMM leadership for advice. I intend to have at least one young adult serve on this taskforce, and will finish recruiting people during the board meeting.

ADVISORY GROUP FOR GA2012 PER BUSINESS RESOLUTION

Now that we've solicited comments from congregations (actually, individuals), we need to set up the advisory group outlined in the business resolution, or not. A discussion of the resolution is scheduled for Saturday afternoon so we can be clear what we are/are not doing and what progress is being made so we can report to our congregations and other stakeholders.

BOARD/ADMINISTRATION RELATIONSHIP

At our August conference call, Jackie and I reported that two trustees and I would be working with Peter, Harlan, and Kay and a consultant on conversations and a process to clarify and improve the relationship between the Board and the Administration. The goal was that this group would meet prior to the Board meeting, and perhaps we'd have some activities with the Board during the Board meeting. However, this process is moving more slowly than we'd hoped in August. We have finally identified a consultant recommended by Alban; she will be interviewing Peter and me next week. I hope to have more news on future steps when we meet.

¹ Cross reference to: "Flogging will continue until morale improves"

MONTHLY PERSONY MEETINGS

How easily we slid into the meeting version of the Field of Dreams: If you schedule it, they will put items on its agenda. (I say “we”, because I think I helped plow up the corn field.) Reserving a monthly time for a virtual meeting in case we need one is a good idea. Meeting every month is probably not. I didn’t schedule specific time for this conversation, but perhaps we can discuss it as part of our focus time on Wednesday, have a group work on this on Saturday night, or ask CoCo to talk about some general guidelines for meetings between meetings.

FOLLOW UP ON DEBRA HAFFNER’S REPORT

On February 22, 2011 there will be a 10am to 4pm meeting in the library at 25 Beacon Street to discuss the information and recommendations in the report, *Toward a Sexually Healthy and Responsible UUA*, which Debra Haffner discussed with us at the June pre-GA Board meeting. The board needs to send two representatives to this meeting. The reps need to review the report and be prepared to lead a discussion at the January Board meeting to get feedback on the report so they can speak for the Board at the February meeting. If you feel called to do this, please speak with Jackie Shanti before dinner on Friday at the Board meeting so we can appoint our reps on Saturday in Executive Session.

BOARD RESPONSIBILITY FOR GA AGENDA

Part of the Moderator’s role every September is resisting the deep desire of the GA Planning Committee to dramatically reduce the time for plenary so they can provide more workshops, or increase the time for meals, or end earlier on Sunday. This year’s suggestions for plenary included deleting the Beacon Press report, cutting Breakthrough Congregation videos (they can show the videos in workshops), and eliminating all reports except those of the President and Moderator. These suggestions weren’t for 2012, but for 2011. I pointed out that since the Board has already committed to less business time in 2012, I wasn’t comfortable reducing time in 2011 without a conversation with the Board.

There will always be a tension between time allocated for business and time allocated for workshops and other activities. As part of figuring out what it means for the Board to take responsibility for the GA agenda, I’d encourage some policies to guide the board, moderator, and Planning Committee in this brave new enterprise. I’m willing to do the plenary agenda for 2011 so we don’t have to figure this all out in the next two Board meetings, but we should have a Board policy that makes GA agenda creation part of the Moderator’s job. Saturday night? January?

IN CLOSING

That’s it for now. Travel safely. Arrive energized. This is going to be a great year on the UUA Board of Trustees.

In faith,
Gini