

To the members of the Unitarian Universalist Board:

I am currently the chair of the Open committee, up for reappointment. My other committee member, Caleb Raible-Clark was assigned to this committee a few years ago. We believe it is in the best interest of our association to dissolve this committee.

Due to life events and the pandemic, this committee has not met for two years. In that time, not one committee or member of the UUA board contact us regarding our work. Before this unexpected hiatus, we carried out our duties after working with Cheri Cody and Christian Schmidt dutifully. We reviewed the websites of various committees and checked that the notes were current and that the meeting times were public. We attended GA and observed various committee meetings to ensure they allowed observers.

We would contact committees if they were out of compliance, and issued a report to the board with the status of committees that were in and out of compliance. However, in my time serving on this committee, we never received any communications back from any other committee regarding their compliance. We never received communications from the board indicating our report was helpful or needed.

Given that we lack an enforcement mechanism to compel committees to respond to us, we feel that there is no purpose to this committee as it is not part of a larger accountability mechanism for committees. Furthermore, as times have changed and the pandemic moved many functions online, the nature of how committees operate and meet has changed to where they may no longer use websites as their main gateway to transparency. Some may be using social media more heavily to announce meeting times or use another online service to post their notes. As there is no standardized system for how information gets out to the average Unitarian Universalist given the blooming of information pathways since 2004, we feel that this committee is not serving the original intent of its formation.

We suggest that if there is a requirement for meeting notes, meeting announcements, and observers, that there be a standardized committee system, and an enforcement mechanism if committees do not communicate with the board or other committees. We envision that as part of a standardized information system for committees that the requirements as assigned to this committee could be met. Also, to meet the spirit of this committee's foundation we believe there should be an anti-oppression analysis - how are we ensuring that the work that committees do is accessible and transparent given ableist and white supremacist barriers that are inherent in the operations of Unitarian Universalism? What structures would address this and meet the spirit in the creation of this committee? How can we be pro-active and inclusive about the way committees in our association work?

Given these observations and alternatives, it is our recommendation before the board that this committee be dissolved. We are glad to do this work! However, if the work is not making the change of having committees be in compliance and the standards in which compliance was created have changed as technology has advanced, the needs this committee fills should be fulfilled in other ways.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Shawna Foster
Caleb Raible-Clark