

Religious Education Credentialing Committee (RECC)

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Observer Report April 27- May 3, 2022

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I know that immersive experiences like cons, camps and retreats have the potential to transform and deepen faith and give us a glimpse of what is possible in religious communities and in the world. What I didn't know is that a week long business committee meeting could have that same impact. As I end my week as an observer to the RECC, I have a similar exhausted elation that I have at the of a powerful week of UU youth camp.

My faith has been deepened and transformed this week by serving as this year's Observer to the RECC. I was able to glimpse how transformative it is to be in a community that centers spiritual grounding throughout its work. The RECC in its practices takes seriously and lives into the covenantal and theological underpinning of our faith and its polity from the opening worship, through the business, to the closing.

I particularly want to lift up the work that the committee is doing in justice, equity, diversity and inclusion. The committee has created a community of trust, intimacy and courage where white supremacy and oppression are challenged with love. The culture of the committee is one of compassion, curiosity, humility, deep listening and of gratitude towards each other and each candidate for credentialing. It is hard to even articulate how much being a witness to a community that takes liberation to heart in its practice has changed, challenged, and inspired me.

It was also hopeful and inspiring to me to sit in the candidate interviews and witness religious educators who have responded to the challenges of the pandemic with creativity and passion and serve our congregations with liberatory faith and love. I was full of awe.

Religious educators are fond of saying that administration is a ministry. We say it because it is true!! And the UUA staff, Aastha Poudel and Sarah Gettie McNeill provide excellent administration ministry for the RECC program and to the committee. Their care is evident in every interaction. Rev. Sara Lewis, the chair of the committee is an inspiring leader in her spiritual grounding, depth of knowledge about the credentialing program, religious education and our faith. The work of the committee is truly shared by a dedicated group of lay people, ministers and religious educators who serve with integrity. It is demanding work. Integrity is the word that best encompasses the committee and its work. I wish everyone who goes through credentialing could have some sense of their love and dedication.

Things to consider:

Professionalism

Being a part of this process made me think a lot about how *professionalism* is such a part of white supremacy culture. It is a way of gatekeeping and establishing dominant norms that are oppressive. I wish we had another word to guide us which captures the qualities we seek to encourage, nurture and honor in credentialing excellent religious educators. The process of credentialing is one of the things that forms us as religious educators and so it behooves us to be attentive to what words we use and focus on. Foregrounding the word *professional* may push us to focus on things that are oppressive and obscure values which are essential and liberatory.

I'm so glad that I got to see the committee do its work -- to see how the candidates and their vocations are held by the committee. When I went through the process myself last year, it felt professional, definitely. But also

lonely and much of the experience eroded my confidence instead of empowering me. I found being an observer to the RECC reframed my own credentialing experience in a positive way.

How to respond to candidates' lack of preparation in particular areas

When candidates are consistently underprepared in particular areas, some analysis is needed to see how expectations can be more effectively communicated earlier in the process. And interview questions may need to be reviewed as well to more effectively unlock learning and experience that the candidates do have.

Weight Given to Strengths and Weakness

Candidates are strong and weak in different ways. And it wasn't always clear to me how strengths and weaknesses are weighted. It might be helpful to have a rubric to aid in the evaluation of candidates.