

Commission on Appraisal 2007 GA Written Report

At last year's General Assembly in Saint Louis, the Commission announced that we would be undertaking a review of Article II of the UUA Bylaws — the Principles and Purposes of the Association. A periodic review is required by the Bylaws. This text is intended to be neither creedal nor inviolable. Rather, it should be a living document that is periodically re-examined to ensure that it “works” for us — that it functions as a touchstone for our common life as congregations in voluntary association

We saw this work as a natural outgrowth of the study of UU theological diversity released in 2005. Our main rationale for the Commission on Appraisal being the appropriate body to undertake this work was our independence from both the UUA's Board of Trustees and Administration, and the fact that we answer directly to the General Assembly. This puts us in a unique position in comparison to a task force created specifically for the purpose of carrying out such a review.

We have spent a lot of time over the last year developing our process, trying to ensure that we go about this important task in a way that will allow us to get the most accurate sense possible of how individual UUs interpret this text, how they incorporate it in their spiritual or religious lives, and how the Principles figure in their congregational life, especially worship life. While the texts included in Article II, most obviously the Principles, are used in a variety of ways in different settings and contexts, it must be remembered that first and foremost this text is a statement of covenant and common purpose among the congregations of the Association.

Since Saint Louis, we have created a variety of means by which to gather information. We held open hearings at GA and in Washington, DC; San Diego, CA; and Denver, CO. We have received and reviewed a number of personal communications from interested UUs, submitted via the Commission's email <coa@uua.org> and by postal mail to the UUA Headquarters. We have been conducting interviews with specific individuals whose positions in the UUA or whose roles within our movement give them unique insights into the role of the Article II texts. More such interviews are happening this week, along with meetings with representatives from youth, young adults, UUs of color, and other groups. We also will be conducting another open hearing this week (Saturday at 10:45) as well as providing a booth in the exhibit hall near the UUA Bookstore area so that people can stop by at any time during GA and give us their thoughts on this process. We hope that many of you will take advantage of these ways to be involved in this process.

Most importantly, we have solicited input from every congregation in the Association. In January of this year a packet of materials was mailed to all UUA congregations providing a plan for four different workshops on Article II: a three-session adult workshop, a single-session adult workshop, a youth workshop, and a children's class. Since then, a more intensive five-session workshop has been made available through our website, <www.uua.org/coa/>. We requested that every congregation hold at least one of these workshops, complete a feedback form, and submit it to the Commission online or by mail. Some congregations have already done so, and we hope to hear from many more of you by the early fall. If your congregation has not held such a workshop, please do. It would make a great kick-off for the new congregational year in

September. If your congregation's printed materials have been mislaid, everything is available for download on our website.

The UUA Bylaws require that this review of Article II must be completed within three years. Therefore our work will culminate at the 2009 General Assembly in Salt Lake City. If we recommend any changes, the delegates at the 2009 GA will vote whether to put them on the 2010 GA agenda. If 51% in 2009 favor doing that, the revisions will need 2/3 vote of approval by the delegates at the 2010 GA to be adopted as a revision of the UUA Bylaws.

This is important work in the common life of our Association — please encourage your congregation to take part.

Respectfully submitted,
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