

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
Commission on Appraisal



General Assembly, 2010

Minneapolis, MN

**Minutes**

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**Thursday, June 24, 2010**

**Present:** Erica Baron, Barbara Child, Megan Dowdell, Pete Fontneau, Bev Harrison, Nana Kratochvil, Don Mohr, Michael Ohlrogge, Jacqui Williams

The meeting began with an opening led by Megan. Barbara then reviewed the agenda and the Commission checked in.

The Commission approved the minutes from the April 2010 COA Meeting.

## **Review of Thursday Morning's Hearing:**

- Approximately 100 people participated
- People responded quite positively to the format and content of the hearing. People liked the discussion and the questions.
- People seemed quite willing to engage and got right into the process.
- Very thoughtful engagement with the questions. A range of answers for us to wrestle with.
- People were leaving the room saying "this is important, this is big, I hadn't thought about things like this before".
- Really wasn't much tension between laity answers and minister answers. Agreement from both groups that this is good.
- Don will type up the written recorder sheets from the hearing.

## **CoA Discussion Group on Saturday:**

- There are only two round tables, capacity for 20 people max or so. Not a lot of an ability to expand on this.
- BUT, it starts right about the same time the big public witness event ends. This will probably take away from people participating.
- We can just run it by telling anyone who comes "what more do you want to say?" and then take notes. Most people who come will have probably already been to one of our events. We do want to find out who is there. If it's people who have already been to an event, then we don't need to explain what we're doing again. If it's people who haven't been yet, then we just re-run this morning.
- Some people who didn't get a chance to report on Thursday's hearing may come on Saturday to share more.
- Could be an opportunity to get more in-depth stories from people – ask people what about this topic made them want to come.
- Given the insights from this discussion, we should be in a good place to play it by ear when we get to the discussion. Erica will orchestrate the process. Megan will fill in for taking minutes.

## **Update on Article II Archives:**

- Report by Jacqui
- Nothing new to report. Jacqui is continuing to work on this and will report again in October.
- We're still waiting to hear back from the archives about what they want and in what format.

## **Technology Task Force Report:**

- Report by Pete & Jacqui
- Our capabilities and the capabilities of tools.

- We have varying levels of tech savvy, willingness, and access amongst the CoA. Thus, coming up with things that will work for all of us is difficult. Doing things with phone is more doable, there's more differentiation amongst CoA members concerning computer capacities (hardware, high speed internet access, etc.).
- Wouldn't work to do hearings with technology that requires people to subscribe to a service.
- We can piggy back onto things that the UUA has.
- Just to have a meeting amongst ourselves is one thing – inviting congregations and districts to join us is more difficult. Right now, we as the CoA don't have the uniform technology for people to hook into.
- BUT, the work the UUA Board has done for the use of Persony is good. One nice thing about this is that at a minimum, all you need is a regular phone line. Thus, even if all the computer and tech stuff you have doesn't work out, people can still participate using just a phone line. This service allows for sharing of documents and other computer extras. Can't display text on screen and edit it when the computer fails, but can still talk using phone. Persony has a lot of ability to increase the size of the group. It could be possible to do a hearing using this technology. But Pete isn't quite sure how yet, we'll need to learn about how to use it. Pete is asking questions like "how do you break up into small groups and then come back?". The gurus are trying to figure this out, but don't have an answer yet.
- Persony only has five or six images that you can get easily, if we wanted our faces talking on the screen. Skype has a similar limitation and has much more significant software limitations. Persony was designed to fit any operating system and seems to work.
- Persony is the platform for many other services, even if they attach a different name to it.
- Cost: the UUA owns a license for Persony. Nancy Lawrence has ability to set sessions up for the CoA, although we might want to bring that knowledge internal to the Commission.
- Persony doesn't require any special software downloads, you just dial into it. It's all on a web-based platform.
- We could do meetings via satellite sites with Erica and Jacqui together on one computer, Bev, Michael, Megan on one computer, etc.
- However, until we get to the stage of the work when we're doing document editing, a conference call will probably work just as well as persony.
- Important to remember that we don't need to replace the lost in-person meeting with a long over-the-phone/internet meeting. It could be several shorter ones, each with perhaps only a couple agenda items.

## **Report on Responsive Resolutions:**

- Bev reported on the status of past responsive resolutions concerning the Commission and its work and gave an overview of the process and procedures for making and approving these resolutions.
- The Commission decided no further action was called for on its part at this time. cultivate supporters.

## Review and Discussion of Reflection Papers:

- Commission members broke into groups to review and reflect upon the reflection papers written by Commissioners regarding possible questions, scope, and focus for the Commission's new study.
- The results of these discussions informed the Commission's further deliberations, documented below.

## Scope of our Study:

- The Commission decided that for the present time, it will focus its study on the relationship between ministry and authority within UU congregations specifically. Commissioners did note, however, that we will not rule out the possibility of also including discussion of matters outside the congregational context. It is possible that the study of congregations could serve as a sort of "learning lab" and the findings we draw from that could then be applied to broader settings within UUism.
- At this time, the Commission will continue working on the whole study as a whole group, rather than dividing it into pieces for individual commissioners or groups of commissioners to work separately on.

## Focus Groups in Social Science Research:

- Report by Erica
- Usually 6-12 people but you want to plan them for more so you get that number to show up
- Best to not mix people across lines of power
- Reason to use focus groups: more efficient than talking to each person individually. Also though, the interaction between the people in the focus group is another data point.
- Commission decided not to work with case studies until we've done the focus groups. Might hear about new possibilities for case studies through the focus groups.
- David Morgan has written on focus groups. He uses a "guide" for moderators of the focus groups (that would be us) so they're all doing the same thing. Different styles:
  - +In one, the moderator isn't even in the room
  - +On the other end, the moderator asks a specific set of questions and does not allow deviation from that.
  - +Somewhere in the middle is asking some questions but then allowing open space for the group to talk.
- If you're too directive, you don't get data you don't expect. If you're too loose, you can't compare information from group to group.
- Need to Decide:
  - +Who we talk to
  - +Level of moderator involvement
  - +Do we ask everyone same questions or diff questions for diff groups
  - +Do we run these just ourselves, get other people also?
  - +How are we going to record the data?

## **Who Should we Talk to?**

-The Commission brainstormed a long list of potential groups of people it would like to conduct focus groups with. This list will be prioritized and refined between now and the end of the Commission's September meeting.

## **Structure of Focus Groups:**

- Moderator in the room for focus groups (Commission agrees)
- Some time in the focus group for open discussion (Commission agrees)
- Commissioners won't be the only people facilitating these groups (Commission agrees)
- Timeline for these: We want to have the guide developed before we go to Bloomington so that we can test the model out and tweak it as needed depending on how those groups go.
- Erica, Nana, Bev will form a small group to create a draft version of the discussion group guide, Jacqui and Megan will send them resources. This small group will decide on a process for what to do with their initial product and how to get it to what we use in Bloomington. The small group guide will include recommendations on how to record the audio from the focus groups. Guide will also include issue of using people's recorded voices, words, names, etc.
- Barbara will corral the focus groups we decide we want for the Bloomington meeting.

## **Reading List:**

-Erica presented a draft reading list for the Commission to help establish background information and context for its upcoming study. The Commission discussed this list, suggested several modifications to it, and then divided up its contents amongst various commissioners to read and report back on.

## **Prep for Sunday's report:**

- Commissioners are to arrive at 11:00 AM.
- Commissioners should line up in reverse alphabetical order. Walk on stage in reverse order (Jacqui is first to go on, Erica is last)
- Wear nice clothing.

END OF MEETING.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Michael Ohlrogge, Secretary  
Commission on Appraisal