

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
Commission on Appraisal



October Meeting, 2010

Nashville, IN

**Minutes**

**Table of Contents**

Minutes & Study Notes:..... 2

Moderator Guide:..... 2

Project Activities after This Meeting: ..... 2

Next Year’s GA: ..... 3

Checkup on Reading: ..... 3

Focus Groups: UU Church of Bloomington, Indiana. .... 3

Planning Future Focus Groups: ..... 3

Online Focus Groups: ..... 4

October, 1, 2010

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

### **Minutes & Study Notes:**

- Michael will make sure to send agendas to Carol Agate as well as having Nancy posting it on the CoA website
- Minutes from GA 2010 approved

### **Moderator Guide:**

- The Commission discussed the guide it will provide to non-commission members who moderate focus groups for the current study
- Erica produced a draft version of this guide, which the Commission discussed and provided feedback on.
- The Commission also practiced using the moderator guide in role-play sessions to further assess ways of maximizing its usefulness for future moderators.
- The Commission made plans to use the moderator guide at its workshop at the Bloomington Church on October 2nd before finalizing the version to be sent out to other moderators.

### **Project Activities after This Meeting:**

- The Commission discussed different groups of Unitarian Universalists to seek input from. Some of these will be people whose jobs it is to study and understand various aspects of ministry, such as historical theologians, district and regional staff, Ministerial Settlement Representatives, and so forth.
- Other people are those who live directly in relationship to ministry and authority, such as ministers (and various subgroups of ministers based on identity), directors of religious education, church board members, and so on. The Commission will also seek input from existing groups that deal with related topics, such as ministerial study groups.
- All of the people in these groups will get the same questions provided to them in the focus group process, but the framing of the questions and followup questions may vary depending on the specific composition of the focus group.
- Each Commission member will take responsibility for organizing (but not necessarily leading) several of the groups of people whose participation the Commission seeks in focus groups.
- In some instances, electronic focus groups may be the most appropriate or feasible method for conducting the research.
- The Commission will seek to conclude work on the focus groups by around GA 2011. After this, the Commission's work will shift towards more detailed case studies,

using the data and insight gained from the focus groups to identify congregations for case studies as well as the specific targets of inquiry in those studies.

### Next Year's GA:

- The CoA will do a sermon contest for this year's GA slot. Barbara will write up the description for this accordingly for the writeup due Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>. (\*Note: after the Commission's in-person meeting, the CoA realized the infeasibility of this idea in the context of the data needs for the present study – the Commission thus shifted its plans for GA back to a hearing to gather data and input regarding its present study).
- Jacqui & Megan will work on plans for a youth hearing

### Checkup on Reading:

- The Commissioners discussed their various reading assignments pertaining to the current project and agreed to complete them by GA 2011.
- Those CoA members who are leaving in June '11 will do and report on reading unique to them but will not be obligated to do foundational reading.

10-2-10

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### Focus Groups: UU Church of Bloomington, Indiana.

- In the morning and afternoon, the Commission traveled to the UU Church of Bloomington, IN, to conduct a series of focus groups around the topic of ministry and authority. Participants included ministers, church board members and presidents, religious educators, and many others, drawn from churches throughout the Heartland District.
- Following the focus groups, the Commission re-gathered to discuss the results from the discussion and to make further suggestions for refining the focus group leader guides to be used for future focus groups.
- Commissioners will send additional feedback regarding the focus group guide to Erica and Barbara by October 15th, following which they will produce an update version of the guide.
- Commissioners will produce verbatim transcriptions of the audio recordings from the focus groups they each lead, sending those transcriptions to Erica by November 1st

### Planning Future Focus Groups:

- The Commission decided to set up electronic listserves to solicit input and discussion from the experts that it is seeking out for the project, rather than using the focus group method for them. These will include

- UUA staff
- Interim ministers
- MSRs (Ministerial Settlement Representatives)
- Good Officers
- All others (ministers, board chairs, etc.) will still use focus groups, and these are to be completed by the end of GA 2011, including potentially some focus groups at that General Assembly.
- The Commission will seek geographic diversity in conducting these focus groups.

### Online Focus Groups:

- Presentation by Pete & Jacqui
- (preferable to do focus groups in person, but if this isn't possible, online option is a backup)
- Persony probably best, can work well for a group of six or so (Skype also possible, but probably not as good).
  - Gets more complicated/expensive when you get beyond six. Size of image on screen also becomes more of an issue.
- Technical issues we saw at play today get heightened for this.
  - Notetaker absolutely essential
  - (if several people are in one location, that's where notetaker should be)
  - Moderator can run the connection from Persony. Handraising can be handled by moderator
  - Session may go more slowly because moderator is doing more than one task (i.e. may need to break to deal with technical issues). Probably best, if at all possible, to have one person moderating and another person in charge of technical issues.
  - If video runs into problems, will default just to audio
  - May need an amendment to the moderator guide for Persony. Will probably want to test drive this as we did with in-person today.
  - The more you can get people together in one place, the better.
  - For a fee, Persony will record audio. But, this can also be done with a separate audio recorder.
  - Video aspects can be helpful in getting participants to connect more fully, allows body language to be conveyed, helps people feel more comfortable.
  - Commissioners who decide to use an online focus group should let Erica know this so that that commissioner can work with Erica, Jacqui & Pete to make this happen.

Respectfully Submitted,  
 Michael Ohlrogge  
 Secretary, Commission on Appraisal