

**MINUTES**  
**COMMISSION ON APPRAISAL**  
**OCTOBER 17 - 20, 2013**

**Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center, Chicago, IL**

Commissioners Present: Nana Kratochvil, Erica Baron, Lucy Bunch, John Cullinen, Megan Dowdell, John Hawkins, Nato Hollister, Lynne Garner, Myriam Renaud

Also Present Friday, Oct 18: Ian Evison

**Thursday, Oct 17**

The Commission came to order.

**Overview of meeting**

The Commission reviewed the agenda for the meeting. The Commission set the following goals for this meeting: a covenant that the Commission can use to guide its work, and a start on selecting the topic for the Commission's next study. Process and ARAO Observations were offered.

**Friday, Oct 18**

**Work with Consultant Ian Evison**

**Background: Personal and Institutional**

Ian told the Commission that in work on Intercultural Competence, it is important to bring forward the things about yourself that the group needs to know in order to function well. To this end, Commissioners spoke about personal backgrounds and styles that would be helpful for others to know.

In order to do our work effectively, it is also important to surface the history of the institution that might still be impacting the Commission's work and functioning. To that end, we had a conversation about the history and recent past experience of the Commission.

Finally, Commissioners reflected on groups they had been in that worked well, in which the group was successful at its task and felt energizing to be a part of. Commissioners shared the elements that made an experience work for them.

Process and ARAO observations on the morning's work were shared.

## **Covenant**

Led by Ian Evison, the Commission drafted a covenant for its work together, considering what individual Commissioners would like to have in a covenant, and also considering the past covenant of the Commission for items that should be brought forward. The Commission's draft covenant is:

Take your commitment seriously

Take responsibility for letting your needs be known, and be mindful that others' needs may be different from your own; and respect each other's boundaries

Make space for differing cultural styles and approaches with a willingness to negotiate who adapts

Clarity by the end of the meeting time about task assignments and deadlines

Encourage each person to identify and develop their skills and use them for the good of the group

Engage with the spirit of faith and love

If you don't know or understand something, ask

Choose a realistic scope of work at a reasonable human cost

Affirm one another's contributions

Express your discomfort

Use the first person in expressing an opinion

Help each other be accountable to the covenant

Use playfulness and humor in engaging with each other

Be aware of the limitations of our cultural boundaries, and make an honest effort to move outside of our cultural comfort zone(s)

Respect the time commitments of the group

Have a group commitment to the agenda and the work

Practice transparency

Do the work mindful that we are part of a living tradition

Thoughtfully engage Unitarian Universalists, and particularly those from

historically marginalized groups, in a spirit of accountability

Actively maintain a good relationship with the Board and the UUA staff

Give full attention, as much as possible, during our meetings, and be respectful in our use of technology

Forgive ourselves and each other when necessary

Make the work possible for those with different levels of privilege

The Commission then considered how to make the covenant live as an active, helpful part of our work together, and shared hopes for the Commission's work together.

Process and ARAO Observations were offered on the afternoon's work.

### **Topic Selection**

The Commission discovered that due to a problem with the technology of the form on the COA website, the Commission did not have access to the suggestions for possible topics submitted through the website. The Commission discussed what to do about this. Work will be done to get this data back, or in the worst case, to solicit it again. Meanwhile, the Commissioners' own ideas can be shared, and the Commission does still have access to the suggestions from the beginning of the last reporting cycle, and could reconsider those that were not taken up at that time.

### **Independence**

The Commission reviewed the description of its work in the UUA By-Laws and in the Commission's own mission statement:

#### *Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association*

##### *Section 5.9. Commission on Appraisal*

The Commission on Appraisal shall consist of nine members elected to terms of six years. One-third of the members shall be elected at the regular General Assembly held in each odd-numbered year. After serving a term in office, a member shall not be eligible for re-election until after an interim of at least six years.

The Commission on Appraisal shall:

- (a) review any function or activity of the Association which in its judgment will benefit from an independent review and report its conclusions to a regular General Assembly;

- (b) study and suggest approaches to issues which may be of concern to the Association; and
- (c) report to a regular General Assembly at least once every four years on the program and accomplishments of the Association.

#### *COA Mission Statement*

Grounded in the living tradition of our free and responsible faith, yet charged with acting independently, the Commission's mission is to provoke deep reflection and to evoke timely creative transformation of Unitarian Universalism, our congregations, and the Unitarian Universalist Association.

The Commission considered, in particular, the meaning and understanding of the Commission's independence. The Commission reaffirmed its commitment to its independence in choosing topics for study and in conducting its work, and also affirmed a commitment to being in conversation with the larger UU community, and in particular the UUA Board and Staff while conducting its work.

The conversation included some reflection on the Global Ends of the Association as defined by the UUA Board, and on the Board's description of the UUA's sources of authority and accountability.

Process and ARAO Observations on the evening's work were offered.

#### **Saturday Oct. 19**

Morning reflections on the previous days were offered.

#### **Intercultural Competence Work**

Commissioner Erica Baron offered a morning of training in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). (Intercultural Development Inventory and IDI are registered trademarks of IDI, LLC.) The conversation included a presentation of the Commission's IDI group profile, and future work the Commission might do to engage in further development toward intercultural competence. The Commission looked specifically at styles of conflict, and agreed to do more work with conflict and culture at the January meeting.

Process and ARAO Observations on the morning's work were offered.

#### **Moving Toward a New Study**

The Commission began the work of moving toward a new study by reflecting on the question: What are our assumptions about what constitutes an ideal UU congregation or

an ideal UU Universe? Answers to this question suggested four broad categories: Congregational Life, Defining the Congregation and Thinking Beyond Congregations, Social Justice, and Engaging Theology/Theologies

The Commission then considered the actions the Commission can take to move toward these ideals. What sort of work can we do, and how?

The Commissioners added other ideas for possible study topics, and reviewed the few suggestions the Commission did have in hand at the moment. General areas or themes include:

- Congregational life
- Definition of congregations and moving beyond congregations, with one suggestion of a focus on community ministry
- Social justice
- Theology/theologies
- Generational shifts and their impact on Unitarian Universalism
- Ecclesiology/Democracy - how do we do Associational democracy?
- What are we not offering to the world or to our congregations
- Covenants
- Multicultural congregations and Multiculturalism in the UU world, including the factors that keep implementation from happening
- UU Uniqueness
- How to serve lifelong UUs and why do they leave?
- Community Ministry

Process and ARAO Observations on the afternoon's work were offered.

### **How Can We Be Good Stewards of our Restored Resources?**

The Commission's funding has been restored to the FY 2010 level of \$34,000. The Commission discussed how to use this money in a responsible way to do the work of the Commission. The Commission decided to use approximately \$5,000 to provide a copy of our latest report to every This funding allows for three face-to-face meetings, with a subset of Commissioners at General Assembly, or to have two face-to-face meetings and send everyone to General Assembly. The Commission decided to have three face-to-face meetings this year (with this current meeting being one of them), and to send a smaller number of Commissioners - probably three - to General Assembly to give the Commission's report and conduct any other business that needs to be completed there.

The Commission then discussed ideas for meeting locations.

Process and ARAO Observations were offered on the evening's work.

## **Sunday, Oct 20**

Commissioners were invited to share reflections from the previous day's work.

Motion to approve the Minutes of the July conference call: John H moved, Lynne seconded, motion passed

Motion to approve the Minutes of the September conference call: Nato moved, John C seconded, motion passed

### **Treasurer's Report**

Commission Treasurer Megan Dowdell spoke about the work of closing the books for FY 2013 and making sure that all the charges on the COA account are accurate and complete. There were some Nominating Committee expenses that showed up on the COA account, and Megan is working to correct that.

### **Roles on the Commission**

The current roles held are: Chair: Nana Kratochvil; Vice Chair: John Cullinan; Treasurer: Megan Dowdell; Secretary: Erica Baron; Chaplain: Lynne Garner. Nana asked that the Commission also designate an Electronics Communication Facilitator to help both the whole Commission and individual Commissioners with communications technology issues as they arise. John Hawkins agreed to take on this role, with assistance from John Cullinan.

Nana also asked that the Commission designate an Arrangements Coordinator to work with our staff contact, Stephanie Carey Maron, to make arrangements for meetings of the Commission, such as lodging, food, meeting space, etc. Lynne Garner agreed to take on this role.

Commissioners also shared talents, skills, and experience they have that might be relevant to the work of the Commission so that the Commission can make the best use of the things Commissioners have to offer.

### **Meeting Schedule**

The Commission had a conversation about the length, timing, and general schedule outline for Commission meetings. It was clear that there was no consensus on the ideal. For the next meeting, the schedule will be Thursday dinner through Sunday dinner.

**Looking Ahead**

The Commission discussed the general process of a study: A year of discernment about broad topic, specific area(s) of focus, and method; two years of research; and a year of writing or producing the final report. The Commission is considering methods of presentation other than a book-style report, and Commissioners will be writing reflection papers on possible methods of presentation before the Commission's November conference call (date and time TBD).

**Covenant**

The Commission reviewed its covenant and will revisit it again in January.

Process and ARAO Observations were offered on the morning's work.

The Commission adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Erica Baron, Secretary