

## Commission on Appraisal MINUTES, JANUARY 23-26

### **Thursday, Jan. 23**

Present: Nana' Kratochvil, Erica Baron, Lucy Bunch, John Cullinan, Megan Dowdell, Lynne Garner, John Hawkins, Nathan Hollister, Myriam Renaud

The Commission gathered and had opening worship.

### **Friday, January 24**

Present: Nana' Kratochvil, Erica Baron, Lucy Bunch, John Cullinan, Megan Dowdell, Lynne Garner, John Hawkins, Nathan Hollister, Myriam Renaud

Commissioners checked in.

*Business Meeting called to order.*

Consent agenda:

Approve Minutes of the October 2103 meeting of the Commission

Approve Minutes of the Conference Calls in November 2013 and December 2013

Accept Treasurer's Report

Accept Report on Budget request to the UUA Board

John H. moved and Megan D. seconded to pass the consent agenda. Passed unanimously

The Commission discussed which items will be coming up on future sections of the business agenda.

*Business Meeting suspended.*

### **Discussion of our interactions with the Northern Texas UU Cluster (NTUUC)**

The Commission had already accepted an invitation to have dinner with the NTUUC leadership this evening. The Commission discussed whether to accept an invitation to attend lunch with the North Texas UU Congregations and present a forum for participants after their awards luncheon. The Commission decided it would be a good opportunity if we could assure 20-25 participants in the forum. Megan Dowdell was tasked with following up with the organizers to finalize plans.

### **Commission on Appraisal Covenant:**

The Commission discussed changes to its covenant.

*Business Meeting called back to order*

John C. moved and Lynne G seconded that we adopt the covenant as it stands at the end of discussion. Passed unanimously.

*Business Meeting Suspended*

### **Working Toward a Theme for Study**

The Commission began a process of evaluating ideas for themes for our next study. This process involved looking for common themes among our conversations in October and the suggestions the Commission received through our website. Commissioners discussed which of the emerging themes felt the most exciting and had the greatest potential to offer something meaningful and useful for Unitarian Universalism at this time.

### **Observations**

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

ARAO Observations:

In discussion of possible themes, a number of people raised issues of class and accessibility (broadly). Perhaps there could or should have been more explicit discussion around how these things specifically affect particular groups as we deliberated, but a concern for impact was inferred to and implied throughout. We did well, can do better.

### **Update on Plans for NTUUC Meeting**

Megan spoke with the organizers of the NTUUC meeting and learned that the forum with the Commission was more central in their understanding of the day than we had thought. The Commission made a final decision to attend and run the forum.

### **Working Toward a Theme for Study**

The Commission discussed ideas for how to include groups within Unitarian Universalism to which we would like to be accountable (for example, DRUUMM) in our theme/topic selection process.

The ideas the Commission was working with at this point in the conversation were:

Generational Shift

Our Mission in the World

Beyond Congregations/Reimagining Congregations

Class/Classism

Who/What must we be?

There seemed to be a lot of energy around the question: What/Who Must We Be? There was some thought that it was the larger question, a meta-theme perhaps, that might lead us to a more specific theme for study. Commissioners engaged in small group discussions of this question.

There are emerging conversations about our core values, the aspiration of beloved community and the things getting in the way, a sense that congregations can feel overwhelmed and beaten up by outside imperatives to be a certain way, and a sense that

there are people missing from our congregations (people of certain classes, races/ethnicities, generations, etc.).

### **Alcohol at Commission meetings**

The Commission discussed creating a policy about alcohol consumption at meetings, and decided to create the following policy: Commissioners will not consume alcohol at our meetings until our work has concluded for the day.

### **Observations**

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

ARAO Observations:

The Commission is keeping ARAO concerns in mind in the discussion of themes. We reaffirm the importance of including groups to whom we would like to be accountable in the conversation. We checked in to make sure we have a plan to follow up about this. We feel the decisions and conversations that are emerging do have the potential to move the UUA toward being a more anti-racist, anti-oppressive community and institution.

The Commission adjourned to dinner with NTUUC leaders.

### **Saturday, Jan. 25**

Present: Nana' Kratochvil, Erica Baron, Lucy Bunch, John Cullinan, Megan Dowdell, Lynne Garner, John Hawkins, Nathan Hollister, Myriam Renaud

### **Intercultural Conflict Styles**

Erica presented a training on conflict, culture, and the Intercultural Conflict Styles inventory, developed by Mitch Hammer. Commissioners discussed their own cultural conflict styles and ways that we can work toward bridging differences in cultural approaches to conflict.

### **Meeting Scheduling**

The Commission discussed a general pattern for days of the week and times of day for our future meetings. We decided that future meetings of the Commission would begin after dinner on Thursdays and end at noon on Sundays.

The next meeting of the Commission will be April 24-27.

### **NTUCC Luncheon and Forum**

The Commission adjourned to attend the Luncheon with NTUUC and to present a forum with participants.

The Commission asked participants the following questions:

What inspires you most in your congregation or this cluster?

What challenges you most in your congregation or in your cluster?

On what other issues or themes would you like more research or study to be available?

Commissioners returned to the hotel for dinner and resumed meeting. Myriam Renaud is now absent

### **Reflection on the Forum**

Commissioners reflected on what we had heard at the forum and in informal conversations over lunch. After the discussion, we agreed on the following list of questions to keep in mind as we pursue any theme:

Questions to Hold On To:

- Who is not in the room? In UUism? In our Congregations? In the ARAO work?
- Where have our children gone?
- Do we really believe the first principle applies to all and not just those in the room?
- Economic inequality within Unitarian Universalism

### **Project Manager**

The Commission discussed changes to the role of Project Manager. This portion of the meeting was led by Lucy. While the details of the role and decisions about who fills it will need to wait until the project is more defined, there was general agreement on the following points:

- The Commission needs a culture of solid shared accountability
- Management of the project should play to individual strengths of our members
- Inevitably, there will sometimes pieces will fall short
- We need to commit to shared responsibility: if there is something you can't do, we need to know it early enough to do something about it, and then it is all of our responsibility to find a way to pick up the slack
- The role and the person in it need to be chosen in relation to the design of the project and the final method of presentation
- We would like to pursue shared management of different segments of a project

Lucy is thanked for her leadership of this session.

### **Observations**

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

ARAO Observations:

As part of the discussion of the project manager role, a detailed description of the work of the last project was offered (what we did when and how). A Commissioner who had been through the process reflected that hearing the story she was reminded of all the ways that ARAO work had been integrated into the previous study. The Commissioner who had offered the narrative then reflected that although she remembered those things as well, she hadn't stated all of them explicitly in the narrative. The discussions and deliberations of the Commission took into account the systemic power of oppression and have an ARAO lens. We reaffirmed that it will be important to keep asking questions about ARAO work at every step of the process. We noted that those who tend toward a more emotionally expressive conflict style are feeling more free to use that style.

During the time for additions, one Commissioner expressed personal offense at a conversation about atheists in UU congregations. Others thought personal offense did not belong in ARAO observations, which are about systemic oppression and impacts of our deliberations on marginalized or under-represented groups. There was some disagreement about whether atheists are a marginalized/under-represented group.

## **Sunday, January 26, 2014**

Present: Nana' Kratochvil, Erica Baron, Lucy Bunch, John Cullinan, Megan Dowdell, John Hawkins, Nathan Hollister

### **Working Toward a Theme**

At this point, we are working with the following list of possible themes:

Generational Shift

New congregational and ministry models

Class/classism

UU relationship to money and capital

Beloved Community/Social Justice/Our Mission in the world

Depth

Who is not in the room?

State of the Association

These are things we want to keep in mind no matter what we study:

Theology

Who is not in the room?

Where have our children gone?

Is this study-able?

Generational shifts

Beloved Community

Core Values

Commissioners chose a theme and spent 30 minutes writing on the following:

What is the value of this theme for our community?

Would it challenge us in productive ways?

What questions would we want to be asking in studying this theme?

### **Observations**

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

ARAO Observations:

It was noted that the discussion of our relationship to money and class definitely brought up issues of oppression. In terms of probing questions, perhaps we might have had a question about the impact of the choice of particular themes on under-represented groups as part of our writing assignment. We did not do so, which was perhaps an opportunity

missed. The current iteration of the commission sees moving the association toward a more antiracist, anti-oppressive body as an essential mandate for our work.

### **Location of Our Next Meeting**

In the service of being near groups doing innovative work we might want to study, we decided to hold our April meeting in Tulsa, OK.

### **Reducing the Size of the Commission**

The Commission discussed the idea of pursuing a process to bring a bylaw change to General Assembly that would reduce the size of the Commission from 9 to 6. Several Commissioners feel strongly that the Commission could do its work more efficiently and effectively with fewer members.

*Called into business meeting*

Erica moved and Lucy seconded that the Commission begin work with the Board of Trustees and the Nominating Committee to initiate a process that will reduce the size of the Commission from nine members to six members, with the reduction completed within the next six years.

The seven Commissioners present voted in favor. The vote is held open until the votes of the two absent Commissioners can be recorded.

*Business meeting adjourned.*

### **Working Toward a Theme**

Commissioners shared the writing completed earlier in the day. Each Commissioner will take the nine writing assignments and attempt a synthesis of them.

### **Observations**

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

ARAO Observations:

The Commission continues to observe that ARAO considerations permeate the way we talk about the themes we are considering. A suggestion was made that rather than one person offering observations at the end of each meeting segment, we might instead stop discussion and deliberation periodically and reflect together on how we are doing at incorporating ARAO concerns into the current discussion. We will consider this for the future.

**Meeting concluded.**