

General Assembly Planning Committee Minutes, June 21-28, 2005

NOTE: The Planning Committee met daily, with various members absent due to committee assignments, and with various members of the Volunteer Committee present. Formal minutes were not taken at these meetings since they were devoted to checking in, making immediate arrangements, and dealing with immediate problems. They involved no long-range policy discussions or votes.

June 21: Present- Linda Friedman (chair), Lillian Anderson, Ginger Brown, Elizabeth Collins, Betty Holcomb, Elisabeth McGregor, Kathryn McIntyre, Pat Solomon, Jan Sneegas (staff), Brenda McKeon (local chair), Patsy Sherrill Madden (06 local chair).

Jan Sneegas reported that registration before commencement of onsite was about 3200. Depending on what we get onsite (predicting 350), GA will fall about \$120,000 short of budgeted income due to unexpectedly low attendance. No surprises on expenses; they are on target. We will be vigilant and conservative in our spending at GA.

She reviewed Radisson Hotel problems:

Jan has been in discussion with the hotel's General Manager.

The 6/20 water failure was a scheduled shutoff. Water supply is no longer an issue.

There are water condensation problems, with mildew in the Tarrant Room (no longer usable), on the third floor where the children will be. This was an ongoing problem that they failed to notify us of in advance. We will ask for portable air filters and cleaning of the children's space. (Committee members later inspected the children's area.)

The Meditation Room has been moved to the Convention Center into what would have been the Chemical Sensitivities Room (since there no requests for that service).

The hotel promised 6 fully accessible rooms; they informed us Friday they only had 4, then 3, then only one with a roll-in shower. Helen Bishop was finally moved to the only roll-in shower room. Hotel is to let her know it was the hotel's mistake.

Child care problem—Three volunteers hadn't submitted their information to get clearances and cannot work until they're cleared. (These were later submitted in time.)

The Convention Center is doing well; our liaison Blake Mormon is very helpful.

The Renaissance, Ashton and Blackstone are good; the Clarion is unsatisfactory.

Photocopying situation looks OK, but downtown Kinko's has only one person working on Saturday, and some things will have to be done at a more distant Kinko's with longer hours. (Brenda McKeon's husband will handle transport.)

We've requested more security at the Saturday noon press conference and witness against the death penalty in front of the convention center; because a death penalty advocate is gathering people and press.

Elections: The person in charge of helping with elections will check out the equipment and attend the volunteer training. Errors in candidate listing: Linda Bluestein's information didn't make it into the packet sent to congregations; Barbara Atlas is listed under the wrong committee in the program index.

Order of speakers for candidates' forum will be determined by a random order. For non-contested elections, the order was generated using a computer program. For contested races, people will draw numbers from a hat.

The welcome to the next GA will be done primarily in the last Plenary rather than in the Closing ceremony. Patsy will still do a shorter piece in Closing.

Plenary Hall: We aren't renting extra house lights; it will be a bit dim in back of balconies so we will recommend to not sit in back. A lot of the space on the floor (only 250) will be reserved for accessibility and participants. The banner parade will be on the floor only, will be a shorter distance. We need to walk a planned route.

The only mikes will be on the floor; there will be two stairways from the balcony and adequate accessible seating on the floor.

Exhibits will be in exhibit hall nearest the arena. Don't hang banners in the water garden lobby; it will get little entry traffic.

Copying: To copy at Kinko's, pick up a form at GA Office, with event account number, signed by GA staff (Jan, Don or Stacy). Deliver all copied materials to the GA Office.

105. Closing program can't be typed till Sat. after choir person checks the choir names.

Gene McKeon will take it to the 24-hour Kinko's. (Houston and 8th St. closed Sun.)

Head usher needs to be responsible for picking up all programs from 105 and getting them to place where ushers will find them.

Interim Meetings, June 22-27:

These meetings covered a variety of details of coordination and problem spots, and included input from the Volunteer Committee. Among the general points:

We were pleased with the Service of the Living Tradition and thanked Walt for his liaison efforts. There remained some uncertainties about who was doing what (re ushers, ambiance, seating reconfiguration, etc.); there needs to be extra coordination when a separate group (in this case MPL staff) is in charge of a plenary hall program.

The coffee house was a big hit (ran out of coffee).

We sought documentation of specific incidents with the Radisson; some who were shut out and 'walked' to other hotels reported courteous treatment, others didn't. Helen Bishop recommended that we get an advance written agreement with hotels about handicapped access that we can hold them to.

The banner parade and registration process went quite smoothly; a few things could be improved, including crowding problems and length of time it takes. Both Sandy, this year's chief banner volunteer, and Betty Holcomb offered to volunteer to work on it next year. There were no objections to the policy of hanging only congregational banners. Mixed feelings about the parade continue; we need to keep reviewing it.

The message board location generated complaints; we were able to move them once registration was dismantled.

The volunteers would like to be informed of the locations of receptions and other programs not listed in the program book, since they receive many inquiries for directions to such events and couldn't help.

There were complaints about the plenary agendas being internally rearranged and not being specific about voting times; this is the Moderator's purview and lack of clear voting times was intentional on her part.

Chaplains: We had an early problem with the chaplain notification system (failure of the call to forward to a cell phone); this was rectified, and cell phone numbers provided as a back up. The system of using chaplains from the local district works well. There was little use of the office hours; we will review the log. The Planning and Volunteer Committee should have chaplain, crisis response team, and EMT office phone numbers on our phone contact cards.

There were some coordination problems with getting visual images for use in plenary hall.

June 28, 2005: All outgoing and incoming members were present for the review of GA 05; all ongoing members remained for the entire meeting.

Review of GA 2005:

Most of the discussion revolved around the youth crisis that developed on Monday. Betty Holcomb reviewed issues and incidents faced by youth of color at GA. Some of the youth wanted to take the mike at the Closing Ceremony to express their concern and anger. The Moderator persuaded them not to disrupt the closing. After closing they made a documentary of their experiences, using names and specific events. They asked why they were brought into a community like this where they were challenged on the streets. We discussed the need for the Planning Committee to have and provide antiracism training for every GA. Where is the anti-racist lens to look at for everything at GA? Accessibility has an identified portfolio and visibility which is lacking for anti-racism; we need to remedy that. In response to the question of location of GA, Jan pointed out that there was a conscious decision to support the witness of local UU congregations, who are trying to make an impact in their community and make it welcoming to all.

As a result of the controversy, the PC-sponsored youth dance was canceled by the youth. (The dance started, then a youth came in and announced it was canceled; we aren't clear on who canceled it. Tim Murphy, a youth advisor, said a decision was made by a group of youth that a dance was inappropriate when youth group was broken and youth in pain.) Lillian Anderson, who was responsible for the evening entertainments, noted that it was a problem that the Planning Committee was not consulted and communicated with, thus had no information or way to explain to people who had to be turned away. The process was not a good one; we need ways to communicate in tense or emergency situations and have to collaborate in decisions that affect a wider UU audience. Betty Holcomb described the problem as based on white UU's in general being in denial and oblivious to the factor of race, while the youth don't have the maturity to process and handle it exactly as we would. They want immediate action, not sympathy. There's a division within the youth community as well. The youth are being asked to communicate in writing to the Moderator, the President, and the Planning Committee.

We agreed that next year's theme, 'Toward Right Relations,' offers an opportunity to address our internal relationships, and that it needs to include work on anti-racism and youth-adult relationships. We need to establish dialogue workshops, safe spaces, room for analysis, education, awareness-raising, and bringing concerns to the whole body.

Jan Sneegas noted that in addition to the specific racial incidents, there are difficult ongoing issues about ministering to/with youth within the UUA, denomination-wide; the youth program and polity and youth-adult interactions at GA are a piece of it. Kathryn McIntyre, who has been liaison to the youth leadership, described it as a toxic situation recently. She noted that adults carry a greater burden for communication, but not all of it.

There was also a youth issue around the serving of alcohol at GA events. Some youth leaders feel that if youth are present at events, alcohol should not be served. Failure of adequate carding by the hotels appeared to be common, and some youth were served alcohol or were given it by those of age at GA functions. (The young adult caucus, some of whose members are under 21, reported the same experience.) Jesse Jaeger of the Youth Office will report to us on this issue at our September meeting. We will plan to give significant time to youth office discussions in Sept. We noted that we need to add an antiracism lens to GA site selection, including the issue of witnessing in cities where we go. We discussed communication with Fort Worth officials; Bill Sinkford will communicate with them about the problems encountered. We can also consult with DRUUM. Betty Holcomb, though leaving the committee, agreed to continue to be a liaison and consultant on anti-racism issues and the fallout from this year's problems. We need to establish a GA conflict communication and resolution process in advance, so we're not reactive at the last minute to various situations. Now we need to respond to youth and their sponsors about our concern and desire to set up ways to deal with racist incidents and other problem situations in the future.

Kathryn McIntyre spoke of a broken relationship between the YRUU Steering Committee and the administration. A dialogue is being undertaken that will revise youth ministry; the GAPC is a stakeholder, exploring how GA plays out that ministry. Jesse Jaeger won't have answers in September. A group has been set up; we need to get a copy of it and find out how we can be informed, have input, and be helpful. Bill Sinkford and Megan Dowdell (outgoing Youth Trustee) are the conveners. The newly elected Board of Trustees youth observer is a young woman of color.

Linda Friedman invited committee members to share suggestions by e-mail to her. The Executive Committee will meet in Boston in July and can post a response on the website based on our discussion and further input.

Another problem surfaced in our discussions was in response to the CUUYAN-sponsored transracial adoption program; the plan was for a balance of perspectives, but the person presenting the positive view had to cancel participation, so there was only the negative point of view presented by an angry adoptee, and white parents felt trashed. Gini suggested that we need to vet workshops, look for trouble spots, and have a process if alerted. Do we want to start doing quality assurance in relationship to programming? . We may want to stipulate that if you cannot offer your workshop as described, please talk

to us, you may have to cancel it. We should also include guidelines for workshop presenters re anti-racism/ anti-oppression; this was done some years ago but has lapsed.

The hotel situation continued to be a problem absorbing much staff time. Jan Sneegas, Linda Friedman and Jerry Gabert met with the Radisson manager; due to their negotiations, we getting the accessible rooms gratis, getting our ten formerly reduced rooms free. We will also get a letter of apology from the hotel for their lack of response to a stuck elevator situation and for blaming us for overbooking in their interactions with UU hotel guests.

Committee elections, assignments and preparation for September meeting:

New members were asked to review the committee positions and tasks as defined in the Planning Committee manual; these are based on experience, subject to modification, and we have already discussed some rearrangement/redefinition of portfolios.

It was moved and unanimously voted to elect Linda Friedman as ongoing chair of the committee, Elisabeth McGregor and Ginger Brown as vice chairs, and Lynda Bluestein as secretary. Beth will transfer files to Lynda.

We agreed to send a thank you and edible gift to the GA office staff: Jan, Don, Stacey, and Lorna.

GA Evaluations will be coming in until the Aug. 1 cutoff. We will be able to view the statistical data, and Linda will organize the comments and circulate a summary. We'll get volunteer evaluations or a summary thereof from Brenda McKeon.

Planning Committee Sponsored Programs: These need to be reviewed before our September meeting. (We currently sponsor 10 with \$500, 15 with no money, and 4 major programs at \$3000; the application deadline is Sept. 1, with a review committee of three PC members. Donald, Walt, and Ginger volunteered to serve.

All new members and Patsy Madden need copies of the GAPC manual. We will send a revised Planning Committee member list and the current liaison list to new members. By the end of the September meeting we'll assign liaisons. Everyone needs to send current contact information to Jan. It is unclear whether we all have uua.org email addresses.

Next meetings:

Wed. Sept. 14 (dinner ingathering) through noon Sun. Sept. 18, 2005, at Pickett-Eliot, Boston. This includes a Thursday retreat, with a ½ day workshop with Barbara Bates and anti-racism work.

Thurs. evening Jan 5-Sunday noon Jan. 8, 2006 in Portland, Oregon.

Thurs. April 6- Sun. April 9, 2006, in St. Louis.

GA 06: Arrive in St. Louis Mon. June 19 by early evening, meet through noon June 26.