

Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee
Report to the UUA Board of Trustees
January 2006

Current JTWTC Members: Rev. Sean Parker Dennison (chair), Carolyn Cartland, Bob Gross, Rev. Monica Cummings, Matt Moore, Julio Noboa, Rev. Charles Bluestein Ortman (BOT liaison), Taquiena Boston (President's Representative), Simona Munson (UUA Staff Support)

Our Charge

Since 1997 when it was established by the General Assembly, and most recently reaffirmed by the UUA Board of Trustees in 2004, the charge of the Journey Toward Wholeness Committee is to “strategically plan, coordinate, monitor, assess and guide the transformation of the UUA into an authentic anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural faith community.” In January 2004, the BOT charged the committee to focus on assessment and monitoring for two years.

Introduction and Clarification of the Vision

It is with considerable enthusiasm that the JTWTC makes this report to the UUA Board of Trustees following our December meeting in Boston. At our meeting, our vision of assessing and monitoring the Association through our transition to become an antiracist, anti-oppressive, multicultural institution coalesced. We now recognize that our initial focus was too broad as we expended too much effort trying to be all things to all people; these efforts diverted us from providing the type of effective assessment that the Association needs in order to better understand its progress. By narrowing our focus and providing qualitative in-depth analysis, we feel we can better provide a more useful and meaningful report on the status of the journey.

Borrowing from a model based on the Commission on Appraisal, our intention will now be to choose a particular focus area within the Association each year. We will explore it in depth and then publish a report that would be made available to the General Assembly and to the congregations.

Pending a green light from the Board to pursue our work in this manner, our first area of exploration will be A-R/A-O/MC transitioning within district life. Beginning with our March 2006 meeting, we will select several sample districts and interview district executives/consultants, presidents and pertinent district committees. We will review district meeting minutes and agendas for annual meetings, including workshops, special activities, etc. We will also explore other areas that become evident or pertinent throughout the course of the year.

We will complete the first report at our meeting in March 2007 with plans for distribution at General Assembly. At that time, we will also put into motion the mechanism to begin a new cycle for the following year. Areas under consideration for future analysis include: Ministerial Development, General Assembly and Congregational Life.

Our report will assess the status of transformation both qualitatively and quantitatively as we monitor what is changing within the specific focus area (i.e. particulars, structures, ethos and character, as well as recommendations for remediation, as needed).

The committee feels strongly that the somewhat overwhelming challenges facing us in the past — trying to achieve a vision that has been difficult to grasp – will be greatly ameliorated by the clearer focus. We feel this new vision will allow us to be both effective as a team and will provide the Association with much needed feedback on the transformation process. What has become clear to us is that the guidance for initiatives and programs throughout the Association is coming from the administration and the staff, exactly as it should be. We do not wish to hamper those efforts but to support them. In this more highly defined perspective of our job, we feel we will be better positioned to do just that.

JTWTC Responds to Fort Worth and Commission

From a distance, the JTWTC has observed the racial incidents which marred the Closing Ceremonies at General Assembly in Ft. Worth. We have, as well as we have been able, followed the BOT and Administration responses to those events, including the formation of the Commission that will study them in depth. As the body responsible for assessing and monitoring the A-R/A-O/MC transformation of the Association, we wish to commend both the Board and the Administration for taking appropriate steps to assure that the truth of the incidents will be discovered, justice will be accomplished and the means to prevent similar situations in the future will be identified. We believe this emphatically indicates that the A-R/A-O/MC agenda of the Association is moving forward and that those responsible for the well-being of the larger institution have enveloped the agenda within the institutional structures of it. One request that we would make is that, in the event of future incidents, the JTWTC be engaged, not necessarily as participants in the response process, but in order to be more informed observers of it.

Assessment and Monitoring Accomplishments in 2005

We are proud to report the following accomplishments over the last year:

- ❖ At our March meeting in Chicago, we met with faculty, students and staff from Meadville-Lombard to help them begin a process to identify their current status on the journey towards becoming an anti-oppressive, anti-racist, multicultural community.
- ❖ Beginning with conversations before GA, the JTWTC became formally engaged with the JTW assessment of the Starr King School of Ministry. Their proposed process to evaluate the current status of A-R/A-O/MC at SKSM is fully described in a plan they sent to us in late September and which we discussed at our December meeting. We are very impressed with Starr King's thorough and deliberate approach to JTW assessment and responded to their plan with much praise and some suggestions. We will continue to monitor their progress and actively maintain communication with them during the implementation and evaluation of their assessment.
- ❖ We met with 25 congregational presidents at GA to learn where they think they are on the road to A-R/A-O/MC and what they feel they need to continue the transformation process effectively. As we begin our work with the districts, this work will be very helpful to all of us.
- ❖ The JTWTC provided verbal and then a written response to the September 1, 2005 letter from the Ad Hoc Organizers Committee—Fort Worth 2005.

Upcoming:

Over the next several months, we plan on completing the following:

- ❖ **January 2006** - Attend a conference at Meadville-Lombard with the school's People of Color Caucus, and Undoing Racism and Catalyst for Change Committees to assess their work over the past year.
- ❖ **March 2006** - Provide assessment and feedback to the Committee on Committees' process of selecting chairs and members for committees.
- ❖ **March 2006** - Conclude assessment work with Starr King School for the Ministry's Educating to Counter Oppression and Create Just and Sustainable Communities Steering Committee.
- ❖ **March 2006** - Begin assessment of transformation process in the lives of the districts; define margins of study, assign areas of review and schedule assessment process.
- ❖ **June 2006** - Conduct GA workshop with stakeholders involved in anti-racism, anti-oppression and multicultural efforts on every level of the Association.

Two members of our committee will join you at the Board meeting in January at which time we look forward to further discussions of our charge, vision and future assessment and monitoring opportunities as we work together to make our vision of a multicultural, anti-oppressive, anti-racist faith community a reality.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Sean Parker Dension
Carolyn Cartland
Rev. Monica Cummings
Bob Gross
Matt Moore
Julio Noboa
Rev. Charles Bluestein Ortman (Board Liaison)