

Co-Moderator Report to the General Assembly, June 2018

The theme of General Assembly this year, "All Are Called," reminds us that in order for our faith to truly live out democratic principles, all are called to transform our faith communities and institutions so that we may personify the Unitarian Universalism our world needs today. We remain grateful for the opportunity to serve as co-moderators during this time of transformation.

Where We Started

When we answered the call to become your interim co-moderators last August, we did so in the context of our denomination's most recent awakening to and grappling with the ways white supremacy culture operates in our midst. We also did so while our faith community was still mourning the untimely death of Jim Key, whose term as moderator should have continued until June 2019—and while we were celebrating the election of a new UUA president. It was a moment of turmoil, and loss, and hope, and change.

Everything we have done this year, we have done using a lens of anti-oppression, equity, and building toward a transformed faith community. Your UUA Board of Trustees has been working and collaborating with the UUA Administration to "set a clear vision for a Unitarian Universalism which embraces the fullness of a transformative multiculturalism as a fulfillment of our principles and heritage" and work from a "common understanding of power and privilege as well as a sense of urgency around transforming the Association," in the words of the Commission on Institutional Change.

Lessons Learned

A transformed Unitarian Universalism requires transformed leadership models

A key question for us as co-moderators this year has been: What does it mean to have leader-full movements, leader-full organizations, and leader-full congregations—and specifically, what can collaborative leadership look like in these contexts? For a long time our movement's understanding of leadership has been a top-down one, but as lifelong Unitarian Universalists we believe that collaborative leadership is the most authentically UU model we can use.

When we make space for different leadership models, we make space for different leaders. The role of moderator, our denomination's chief governance officer and chair of the Board of Trustees, is a volunteer, unpaid position—but the skills, experience, and sheer time commitment have historically rendered it virtually impossible for anyone who isn't retired or independently wealthy to serve in this role, meaning it is also most likely to be filled by people who are older, white, cisgender, and able-bodied.

When the highest leadership positions in our faith aren't accessible to people of color, queer and trans people, young people, folks with full-time jobs, parents, people with visible and

invisible disabilities, people with health or family struggles, people who are financially insecure, and others who occupy the margins of our communities, our faith community misses out on the gifts folks like us bring and it is much harder to dismantle the systems that marginalize and oppress people with non-dominant identities and experiences.

Collaborative leadership requires relationship and increased communication

It would have been impossible for us to serve together as interim co-moderators if we didn't already have a long and loving relationship and a sense of accountability to each other. In addition, collaborative leadership takes putting more time and attention into the relationship between us, and solid relationships take work. A lot of people think that the two of us are similar and agree on everything, but in fact we are really different and have experienced many bumps in the road, so working together takes hard work and lots of communication.

In a broader sense in terms of the work of the Board and its goal of transformation, it takes a lot of time, intention, and communication to identify past tensions and avoid sliding into past patterns. The Board has had to do this work amongst ourselves and in our collaboration with the UUA Administration—and we've also learned that it takes all of us to change unhealthy past dynamics and patterns and to actively tell new stories, build new pathways, and work together in new and often uncomfortable ways.

A faithful governance model requires empowering and listening to all voices

One of the biggest things we've learned this year is how many people feel unheard, unwanted, and unempowered in our movement—including respected leaders and dedicated volunteers on the Board and other committees, as well as national and regional staff. We believe that when masses of our people are feeling unheard, unwanted, and unempowered, it means we need to pause and start listening to each other more, and differently—building real relationships so that we can have real conversations and honor each other.

We need all people who are part of this faith movement to feel as though they matter and that they are wanted, needed, and honored in our governance processes—and this means finding new ways for people who have historically not had a place at the table to participate and to feel valued as part of the process—for example, the masses of people who were raised within this faith but can't find a congregation that feeds their soul. We need to be accountable to people in congregations and people who aren't, and to craft the faith that all of us hope for and long for. As people who believe that the process is as important as the destination, we need governance processes where all UUs feel included and as though their opinions matter, and where people who are the most comfortable and whose needs have always been met are invested in making space for those who have been pushed out of this faith.

Year in Review: Living the Lessons Learned

Transforming leadership models

This year we have been reimagining the way leadership works within the Board—instead of top-down leadership, all Board members share leadership (in addition to us as co-moderators sharing leadership between us). For example, everyone on the Board helped plan our last in-person meeting in April, and all Board members have leadership roles at General Assembly, rather than the co-moderators running everything.

We have also been having conversations about how our understandings of volunteer work within our movement need to shift. Currently, most of the top leadership roles held by people with marginalized perspectives within our denomination are unpaid, volunteer positions such as co-moderators, Board members, and elected and appointed committee members. So we've been having conversations about how to infuse more equity into these models, including when and how compensation should be considered.

Part of this conversation relates to the position of moderator itself (see more below). We have been working to rewrite our own job descriptions after recognizing that the scope of the position had grown far beyond what is laid out in our bylaws, and that this has led to lack of clarity of role. So we are working to scale the position back down to focus on governance and on facilitated leadership—facilitating conversations and spaces that empower participants to make decisions and take action.

We are also recognizing the need for leaders to receive ministry as well as provide it, so we are working to institutionalize the role of Board Chaplains and are working with the current chaplains (Rev. Danielle DiBona and Rev. Chris Buice) to formalize the scope of service and the process for selecting future Board Chaplains.

Building relationship, communication, and collaborative leadership

In addition to the hard work that the two of us have done together to maintain our relationship and model collaborative leadership, we've also helped the Board in doing this work as well. The Board spent a lot of time this year building deep group agreements, and some of the hardest ones we did in public, through asking fellow UUs what they wanted from the Board in terms of communication.

The Board has also been engaging in collaborative leadership with the staff and the Administration of the UUA in new ways. It's been particularly gratifying for the two of us to learn and experiment with President Susan Frederick-Gray and Executive Vice President Carey McDonald. Because the four of us all came into our new leadership roles at the same time, we are able to collectively ask questions about the norms and patterns that exist and make intentional choices about which to follow and which to disrupt in service of positive change. We are also all lifelong UUs and younger than fifty (along with all holding one or more marginalized identities)—which is certainly rare, if not unprecedented, for all those in the top level of governance in our movement—and our deep rootedness in the faith supports our dedication to working together.

Because of our collective dedication to practicing collaborative leadership, there have been new relationships, communication, and collaboration growing between the Board, the Administration, and related groups and committees—including the Commission on Institutional Change. We have been reaching out to each other and asking for help and inviting collaboration in new ways. For example, both co-moderators and the Chair of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) worked together to draft a charge that calls on the MFC to evaluate how white supremacy culture has and is impacting its work and, by connection, the present and future of our ministries, and Co-Moderator Elandria and Executive Vice President Carey made collaborative presentations at Finding Our Way Home, the annual gathering of UU religious professionals of color.

Making space for all voices and perspectives

One of the new things we tried this year was doing away with the traditional role of “observers” at the October meeting of the Board. There have long been observers to the Board of Trustees who are able to attend and observe the open portions of meetings. We decided to include everyone who was present, incorporating them into small-group conversations and inviting their feedback and reflections, intentionally including their thoughts in our decision-making. We wanted to craft a different way of being, a different way of doing business, that honors all of us—and there was a richness to the conversation because of all the different perspectives.

We are also working to make more space for all voices and perspectives at General Assembly, by setting aside three times for intentional conversations: (1) during General Session II with focus on the Commission on Institutional Change and UUA Board reports, (2) in small group conversations during General Session VI, and (3) during Sunday morning’s General Session VII, when we will share back from our small group conversations and begin to lay out plans for the future.

Plans for Today & Future

Revisioning our UUA bylaws

In direct answer to the Commission on Institutional Change, which in its April 2018 report called on the Board and the Administration to examine the current governance system in the UUA, we are embarking on completely overhauling our bylaws to make them more liberating and less confining.

Our UUA bylaws were first drafted in May 1961, and have been amended in piecemeal fashion since then. They necessarily carry the biases and limitations of the times in which they were written—for example, historically the UUA was organized as a nonprofit corporation modeled on New England businesses that emphasized fiscal conservatism and “prudence.” Our bylaws need to reflect the faith community we are and that we want to be: adaptive, creative, flexible, centered, and grounded in relationships and linkage, while striving toward being an anti-

oppressive, anti-racist and multicultural organization. Currently, our bylaws are not accessible, include dates and times that are no longer relevant, and are rooted in distrust of authority.

As we reimagine what our faith could look and act like moving into the future, we need a smaller set of bylaws that can liberate our leaders and members to do faithful, sustaining ministry. Over the next year we will be having conversations and dialogues about what this new set of bylaws should and could be.

After General Assembly 2018 we plan to create a bylaws review commission that will work with congregations, covenanted communities, and stakeholder organizations to develop and draft modernized bylaws for General Assembly 2019 attendees to discuss. The Board, in partnership with this commission and UUA staff, will develop a conversation guide for congregations and other UU covenanted communities, and there will also be online and in-person opportunities to continue the discussion.

We plan to ensure that marginalized perspectives have a central voice in this process, so that whatever we create will be accountable to all of us, including those whose needs are not being met in our association. Reimagining our bylaws is going to take all of us—including those whose perspectives are never in the room.

Reimagining governance models

If a faithful governance model requires us to listen to all voices and perspectives, what does that mean when we have a General Assembly where all of our congregations aren't present, where large congregations have a bigger voice by way of having more delegates, and where people who have left congregations because of oppression are left without a vote? This is another central question that we plan to tackle in the year to come.

At General Assembly 2019 in Spokane, WA, we plan to create many more opportunities for deep faith-rooted reflection, contemplation, and discernment, and consider together who we are as a faith, who we want to be, and how our bylaws, policies, procedures, and practices help (and hinder) us. General Assembly 2019 will be run much more like a General Conference, with workshops that serve as strategy sessions leading up to fundamental changes to be voted on.

In addition, the Commission on Institutional Change has talked about the inability of the Board and Administration to work together and the detrimental effects this has had in the past. So we are going to continue building the relationships, communication, and collaboration and also use modified consensus instead of Robert's Rules of Order. Our goal is to find new ways to make decisions we can all move with and also make dissenting views visible.

Moderator election

With gratitude to the Moderator Nominating Committee, the Board was unable to announce a candidate for nomination to the position of UUA moderator by the February 1 deadline. In their search and deliberations, the committee discovered that the position requires more time than

many volunteers are able to give to our movement—particularly those who are not retired and/or have the financial means to do the job as it is currently perceived. The position has no provision for compensation and it is unclear how more than one person could share the permanent role. It also became clear that confusion around the special election for the current moderator position (2018) and general election for the upcoming 6-year term (2019) was also considerable.

At its January 2018 meeting the Board, in consultation with legal counsel, decided to consider ways to restructure the moderator position to make it more sustainable and attractive. The Board overwhelmingly indicated a desire to postpone nominations for the 2019 election for moderator, for at least the coming year. This recognizes the concerns raised by the Moderator Nominating Committee and affirms the Board's own agreement to expand the bylaw-defined role of moderator to include the possibility of co-moderators.

The Board chose this course of action with intention. We are in a time of significant change and opportunity. Our collective renewed commitment to break historic patterns of white supremacy asks all of us to be flexible and open to change. Postponing the nomination allows us to take into consideration any analysis and suggestions that the Commission on Institutional Change may offer. The Board will use the additional time to strategize around this position and develop configurations or possibilities that are more in line with the aspirations of our faith community.

Co-Moderators Year in Review

August

- Appointed as co-moderators

September

- Co-Moderator Elandria attended the General Assembly Mission of the Association of the Partnership (GAMAP), GA Grid, and the GA Planning Committee Meeting, Boston, MA
- Co-Moderator Barb had surgery

October

- Both co-moderators attended in-person Board meeting, Boston, MA
- Both co-moderators met in person with the Commission on Institutional Change
- Both co-moderators were interviewed in an episode of the VUU

November

- Both co-moderators attended District Presidents Association / Regional Leaders Group meeting, Boston, MA, via video
- Co-Moderator Barb attended LREDA—Large conference, Denver, CO
- Co-Moderator Barb attended Bob West's memorial service, Boston, MA

December

- Co-Moderator Barb attended the UU Fellowship of San Dieguito's installation of Rev. Meghan Conrad Cefalu, San Dieguito, CA (bringing greetings from UUA)

January

- Both co-moderators attended in-person Board meeting, Knoxville, TN
- Co-moderators met for an in-person planning day, Peekskill, NY
- Both co-moderators attended meeting of the General Assembly Planning Committee, Spokane, WA
- Both co-moderators attended Denny Davidoff's memorial service, Westport, CT

March

- Co-Moderator Elandria attended and helped lead a session at Finding Our Way Home: A Gathering for UU Religious Professionals of Color, Albuquerque, NM
- Co-Moderator Barb had surgery

April

- Co-Moderator Barb attended in-person Board meeting, Boston, MA, by video
- Co-Moderator Elandria attended in person meeting of the General Assembly Planning Committee, Kansas City, MO
- Co-Moderator Elandria represented the UUA at the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival Press Conference and Strategy Meeting, Washington, DC
- Co-Moderator Barb delivered the charge to the congregation at the Universalist Church of West Hartford's installation of Rev. Dr. Adam Robersmith (by proxy, due to not being recovered from surgery enough to travel)
- Co-Moderator Elandria offered greetings from the UUA at the ordination of Jonathan Jasper Coffee at Tennessee Valley UU Church, Knoxville, TN
- Co-Moderator Elandria served as a special guest on the Environmental Justice Practitioners Network Webinar Series, a joint program of the UUA Green Sanctuary Program and UU Ministry for the Earth

May

- Co-moderators met for an in-person planning day, Walnut Creek, CA
- Both co-moderators met in person with the Chair of the Commission on Institutional Change, Rev. Leslie Takahashi, Walnut Creek, CA
- Co-Moderator Barb attended Graduate Theological Union President Riess Potterveld's retirement celebration, Berkeley, CA
- Co-Moderator Barb attended the ordination of Rev. Amanda Weatherspoon, Berkeley, CA

June

- Both co-moderators attended in-person Board meeting, Kansas City, MO

- Both co-moderators attended General Assembly, Kansas City, MO
- Co-Moderator Barb attended Rev. Natalie Maltar's ordination, Walnut Creek, CA (bringing greetings from UUA)

Every month / ongoing

One or both co-moderators are liaisons to the following elected and board-appointed committees, task forces, and professional organizations (in addition to UUA staff departments), and have been in monthly/quarterly/regular communications with them:

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| • 1st Principle Project Task Force | • Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) |
| • 8th Principle Project Task Force | • Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) |
| • Appointments Committee | • Moderator Nominating Committee |
| • Association of UU Administrators (AUUA) | • Nominating Committee |
| • Audit Committee | • Open UUA Committee |
| • Board of Review | • Presidential Search Committee |
| • Council on Cross Cultural Engagement | • Re-Imagining Covenant Task Force |
| • Commission on Appraisal (CoA) | • Religious Education Credentialing Committee |
| • Commission on Institutional Change | • Retirement Plan Committee |
| • Commission on Social Witness (CSW) | • Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) |
| • Election Campaign Practices Committee (ECPC) | • UU Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP) |
| • District Presidents Association & Regional Leads Group (DPA/RLG) | • UU Ministers Association (UUMA) |
| • GA Planning Committee (GAPC) | • UU Musicians Network (UUMN) |
| • Investment Committee | • UUA Employee Benefits Trust Board |
| • Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee (JTWTC) | • GA Youth Caucus and GA Young Adult Caucus |

Faithfully submitted,
 Elandria Williams and Mr. Barb Greve
 Co-Moderators, Unitarian Universalist Association