

COMMISSION ON APPRAISAL ANNUAL REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2015

We are reporting sooner than we normally would, and in less detail. This is a good thing.

In recent years, the Commission on Appraisal studied and reported on a four year cycle: choosing a topic, reading and deliberating, conducting interviews and hearings, interacting with a broad range of Unitarian Universalists and others, and finally writing and rewriting a report to bring our thoughts and recommendations to our Association. This was a good thing.

This time around, a few months after choosing to study the effects of class in our Association, we encountered some fairly significant disruptions. First we learned that the UUA Board of Trustees was considering Bylaws amendments that would eliminate the Commission, and we engaged with the Board to create an alternative proposal that would result in a smaller Commission, more deeply engaged with the Board and other leadership, reporting yearly, and working with a somewhat different charge. This was a challenging thing to experience; but we believe the proposed bylaws changes deserve your support. We urge you to follow the joint recommendation of the Board and the Commission on Appraisal by passing the proposed amendment.

We also downsized the Commission to six members over the course of this second year, to make better use of limited resources and to move to a more effective size for the work we do.

The future COA's immediate task should be to articulate the task of serving as a qualitative audit committee for our Association and determining how that task should be performed. This would be a good thing.

Finally, with our attention back to our study topic, and facing a transition to a new Commission that would need to take some time to find a new way to work, we affirmed our commitment to examining the topic of class and agreed to deliver a preliminary report to this year's General Assembly. This is a good thing.

Please look for our preliminary report on the Commission on Appraisal's website at <http://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/coa>.

Our Association is class bound, a product of class pressures in our larger society, shaped by and embedded in those pressures as well as our history. We cannot afford to remain so.

The challenges of class in our congregations, in our Association, and in society at large demand a strong institutional response and lasting engagement from us. Working class

people, poor people, middle class people, and class privileged people all need to be part of this effort.

This work is needed for the sake of future generations, not just our own children but everyone's children.

We need to embrace our whole identity, to be Universalists, and not merely Unitarians.

Our rising generations face greater income inequality, globalization, rising terror, climatic disaster, changing modes of work with greater insecurity, systematic oppression, the privatization of the public welfare, and increasing power of capital in a rigged game. All of these things are enabled through class structures. Continuing the work of studying the impact of class on our congregations and association, and the work of envisioning an impact we might have on the world around us is of vital importance. The work needs to be done in deep engagement with people of color and other historically marginalized communities. The inability to do so in this preliminary study has *not* been a good thing.

We are a faith with many theologies. We believe that one we all share is the conviction that we are called to create Beloved Community here, now, on this Earth and not in some distant heaven. And this is a very good thing. We hope that this preliminary report is a beginning at applying this conviction to the realm of class and classism, and we hope that we can inspire others to take up this important work. We call on the Board of Trustees to ensure that our preliminary study of class is carried forward and completed, either by the new COA or by some other body. This would be a *very* good thing.

The current members of the Commission on Appraisal are Erica Baron, Megan Dowdell, John Hawkins, Nathan Hollister, Xolani Kacela, and Nana' Kratochvil, chair. Members who resigned during the our work on this project are Lucy Bunch, John Cullinan, Lynn Garner, and Myriam Renaud. Erica, and I are leaving after a full term of six years. Megan, who may be setting a record, was appointed to fill a vacancy, then elected. Her service is of eight years! It may be a record. Nathan and Xolani have requested to continue their service on the new commission.

We all want to thank those Unitarian Universalists who attended our workshops, shared their stories, and helped us begin this project. They include staff members, volunteer leaders, ministers and laypeople. The work of keeping Unitarian Universalism a vibrant, growing faith takes all of us. Thank you for electing us. Thank you for the work you do. Thank you to all the Commission on Appraisal members who have served us since the first iteration in 1939. May their spirit be carried forward. This would be, indeed, a *VERY* good thing.