

Preliminary Ideas on Re-visioning Social Witnessing at GA

The Commission on Social Witness will be soliciting feedback on this and suggestions for other ideas at the 2017 General Assembly. The report below is an update on our current thinking about a new way to approach social witness activities at General Assembly that will, hopefully address some of the current problems

Any Social Witness endeavor should be consistent with UU values and allow for broad participation ensuring it reflects our commitment to diversity. Adopting position statements is one type of endeavor. Ideas for other types of witnessing will be explored at the 2017 GA, so we anticipate that other suggestions will follow GA. Other ideas might emerge from the Commission on Appraisal's 2017 report on Classism.

The purposes of position statements include to:

- 1) Provide clarity about the UUA's position on key issues
- 2) Allow the UUA and UUs to be a voice in the public sphere
- 3) Raise awareness among UUs about social justice key issues
- 4) Stimulate action at the congregational, cluster, state, regional, and national levels
- 5) Strengthen networking at all levels with others concerned about social justice

New process for developing position statements:

- 1) Congregations or caucuses or UUs already engaged in an issue and who need support of a faith community would submit ideas for statements to CSW. They would have to include a list of related statements that already exist and explain why those are not sufficient.
- 2) The CSW (Not congregational poll) in consultation with UUA staff would say – yes draft a statement for consideration or No – not needed (we already have statements that cover this) or not appropriate. The response might indicate networking opportunities for statement development if the UUA has relevant connections that staff want to nurture.
- 3) The CSW would accept no more than 1 proposal from any entity every two years to ensure that no group dominated the process.
- 4) The proposer(s) would then draft a statement using a format and guidelines that the CSW would establish and submit the draft to the CSW. Guidelines would include suggestions for actions at the congregational level.
- 5) CSW would review draft statements for consistency with UU values, uniqueness, consistency with other statements and positions, need, appropriateness, etc. CSW could
 - a. recommend for consideration by delegates,
 - b. return to proposer with recommendations for revisions, or
 - c. not recommend.
- 6) Those sent back for revisions could be resubmitted once. The only CSW options then would be recommend or not recommend.
- 7) Proposers of those not recommended could submit to GA agenda anyway but would not have CSW endorsement.
- 8) Those CSW recommends for approval would be placed on the GA business agenda to consider for adoption.

- 9) There would be no need to put one issue in competition with another; there would not be an arbitrary limit on the number of statements that could be considered.
- 10) There would be no need for both Statements of Conscience and Actions of Immediate Witness.
- 11) There would no longer be the need for staff to create a study guide.
- 12) Congregations would no longer be asked for comments on CSAIs.
- 13) There could be mini-assemblies on the draft statements (UUs are not happy with no opportunities for amending!).
- 14) Delegates would decide on adoption.
- 15) The next year, the CSW would invite those engaged in this work to display what they have done/are doing at the CSW booth in the exhibit area.

We welcome dialogue with the UUA Board, UUA Staff, GA Planning Committee, and any other relevant body on this idea – and suggestions for other ways of witnessing when we are gathered as an Association.

Commission on Social Witness:

Mr. Richard Bock, Ms. Jyaphia Christos-Rodgers, Rev. Caitlin Cotter, Dr. Susan Goekler, and Rev. Christina Sillari

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