

RECC Observer Report 2015

Sara Lewis, Credentialed Religious Educator, Master Level

The Committee:

- Russ Araujo, Lay Representative
- The Rev. Randy Becker, Parish Ministry Representative
- Kathleen Carpenter, LREDA Representative
- The Rev. Christina Leone Tracy, Faith Development Minister Representative
- Orlando Rice, Lay Representative
- Tandy Scheffler, Chair
- Jenice View, Lay Representative
- Jan Gartner, Professional Development Associate for Religious Education and Music Professionals
- The Rev. Sarah Lammert, Director of Ministries and Faith Development

At my first meeting with the RECC this year, I was jokingly told “now you’ll see how the sausage is made”. Well, I can say now that the sausage is made with great integrity and care. I was most impressed with the dedication, hard-work, and loving care that everyone on this committee displayed throughout the week. The attention to good process, to anti-racism/anti-oppression work, and to the lifting up of professional standards and of Unitarian Universalism were superlative. The committee also seems to just genuinely like to work together, which was good as the days were long this week.

I liked many of the ideas that I heard for improving the program and the process, and I would especially like to lift up that analysis of the data of who came for a credential, and their results, would be a good idea. Despite the committee’s great care and integrity, it would still be good to see if there are any patterns of biased results.

I would also like to make a suggestion, to collect data about how credentialed religious educators are doing and overall statistics. It could lift up the value of this program and the overall profession to show that those holding credentials are continuing in this field and being successful in it.

This year there were three full days of interviews with candidates. Wow, what an intense experience that can be. I commend the committee for the way they balanced care for the candidates with an upholding of real standards for the credential. That is not an easy job, and the same level of care and attention was shown to all twelve candidates.

Every committee member contributed and brought different strengths and perspectives to the group. The question databank and policy work that Russ Araujo developed is amazing! I'm so impressed with that system and I hope a way to make it sustainable without Russ's continued involvement is found. When something is created by an amazing volunteer, it is too easy to lose that progress once the volunteer leaves. I heard a good awareness of this common pitfall, and I trust that the committee and the UUA staff will find a way to continue without the involvement of this volunteer (although I must note that his contributions were clearly remarkable).

Watching and participating in the process, I had suggestions and thoughts to share, but frequently someone on the committee was already observing the same thing. The committee has a learning-mindset and is always refining their process, which is most encouraging for a continued improvement of their already excellent process. Timing will clearly be trickier if the program keeps getting more candidates each year, so there will be a need to continue refining the system in the future. The ideas discussed sounded good, and I hope they work!

The decisions that the committee makes are not always easy, and I appreciate the respectful and caring way those decisions were made, as well as the breadth and depth of expertise and judgment represented on the committee. Where the process was sometimes confusing, as was noted in the debrief meeting, there were good ideas expressed for refining that process next year. Once again, I think the committee has great ideas for moving forward. The growth-mindset is encouraging and I trust that the work of this committee will only get better.

Overall, I just have to say THANK YOU to this committee. Your work is impressive, needed, and awesome. I enjoyed seeing the inner workings of the credentialing program, and was filled with appreciation for how much this credential process represents. Everyone involved, from the candidates to the mentors, from the chaplains to the committee and UUA staff, are lifting up a vision of professional excellence and attention to good process and ethical care that benefits our congregations and the Unitarian Universalist tradition as a whole. It was a blessing to see this in action.