

**Update to Report of the
Re-Imagining Covenant Task Force
October 6, 2017**

The Task Force presented its recommendations at General Assembly this past June. The recommendation for holding General Conferences apart from GA was particularly well received. Reaction from the audience was very positive. Task Force members also heard many positive comments in the hallways as we met GA attendees.

The Task Force's workshop was attended by about 35 people. (This, despite our having thought we canceled it). The Regional Leadership Group was quite enthusiastic, and eager to help. They recommended that regional conferences be considered as part of the General Conference structure.

Task Force member, Rev. David Miller, shared the following observation, "I guess what I would like to say is that it seemed so incredibly well received in general session and at the workshop that in short, Unitarian Universalism is changing and needs to change and this would be a great way to help us. And the help that I think it pointed to is the need for us to deemphasize process and bring our mission back to the forefront of who we are. I think there was a deep desire to have a more complete and widespread understanding of covenant beyond the individualistic interpretation of the principles as determined by various UU individuals and entities. Also, there was a lot of excitement about us being able to forgo the trappings of GA, including the debates and votes on things like AIWs, in order to delve deeper into the calling of our faith and how we can find a common ground to unite us...Personally, I found Susan's report on the beginnings of the association and the links to systems of capitalism and supremacy to be a good enough reason to call us together to revisit the mission/vision and covenant of the association no matter what".

In addition to the recommendation for a General Conference to examine the theological underpinnings of our UU faith, the Task Force has also considered the use of gatherings to help set the Ends/Priorities of the UUA. The latter was addressed in our January 2017 report, recommending the UUA examine the model used by the American Baptist Church, their "Mission Table" process. We have also addressed ways in which congregations and covenanted communities enter into covenant with the UUA, and with each other. We offered the example of periodic, affirmative, renewal of covenant rather than our current system of membership.

The Task Force is aware that since we prepared our April 2017 report, there have been developments that might require a different approach to our work. Specifically, the Commission on Institutional Change will be examining all aspects of our UUA culture and structure. The Purposes and Principles section of our Bylaws will also be examined by a study commission as the result of votes at GA on the proposed "Eighth Principle". The work of the Task Force, and of these other Commissions, need to be coordinated to avoid confusion, duplication of effort or inconsistent recommendations.

The Task Force asks that the Board provide us with direction on how to proceed from here:

- Shall we continue to reach out to UU groups for feedback on the concept of a General Conference?
- Should the Task Force further develop a process for revising the UUA Ends Statement?

- Shall we recruit additional members for the Task Force, particularly UUs whose perspectives are not represented on the Task Force now? (E.g., People of Color/Indigenous, Young Adults, Persons with Disabilities)
- Shall we also elaborate, and seek feedback on, recommendations relating to bylaws changes on how congregations and covenanted communities enter into covenant with the UUA and with one another?
- How should the work of this Task Force be integrated into the work of other commissions addressing related issues?

Task Force members are willing to continue to serve. We await the Board's pleasure.

Re-Imagining Covenant Task Force

Rev. Dr. Susan Ritchie, Chair

Rev. David Miller

Rev. Tom Schade

Kathy Burek