

Commission on Social Witness Meeting



**Eliot/Pickett– Boston, MA
August 20-24, 2012
Notes**

Commissioners present: Commissioners present: David May (Chair), David Breeden, Caitlin DuBois, Susan Goekler

Commissioner absent: Heather Starr

Prior to the meeting, Commissioners reviewed resources provided by UUA Staff for the study/action issue. David Breeden prepared a preliminary draft.

On Monday, August 20, we met for dinner and read the preliminary draft SOC as a group.

On Tuesday, August 21, Susan lit the chalice and provided opening words. Commissioners checked in, then reviewed the agenda, read the mission and covenant, and agreed on the meeting objectives and agenda.

Mission of the UUA Commission on Social Witness

The Mission of the Commission on Social Witness is to engage individuals, congregations, and districts in an ongoing process of study, action and reflection on pressing social issues to deepen our faith, to foster a greater sense of association among Unitarian Universalists, and to proclaim our vision of justice in the world.

Covenant of the UUA Commission on Social Witness

As we, members, staff, and partners, of our UUA Commission on Social Witness, endeavor to do the best work on behalf of our congregations possible; we covenant to be in right relationship with each other by:

- ⊕ finding the holy among each of us;
- ⊕ listening to understand and suspending judgment;
- ⊕ respecting the contributions and circumstances of each other;
- ⊕ trusting each other's good intentions and commitment to our work;
- ⊕ affirming different learning and working styles;
- ⊕ grounding our relationships and work in the practices of anti-racism and anti-oppression;
- ⊕ striving to implement the UUA Statements of Conscience.

We make these promises to each other to establish the basis for a resilient religious community.

Meeting Objectives

1. Affirm and practice our Mission and Covenant
2. Draft an SOC on Immigration as a Moral Issue
3. Share our progress on portfolio responsibilities
4. Manage administrative items (budget, expense reports, meeting schedule)
5. Practice self-care and mutual respect—meditation, check-in, respectful dialogue, ample rest, healthy food, gentle humor

Note: Objectives 1 and 5 apply to all our time together!

We reviewed notes from the June meeting and added to the agenda for Friday consideration of the procedures for AIWs beginning in 2013. Then, we reviewed the CSAI statement on Immigration and the topics proposed by us. We engaged in a visioning exercise on what the world would be like if the world had a just and humane immigration policy.

We agreed on big picture questions that would affect how we wrote the SOC.

1. How approach—international or national?—Answer-International
2. Should we affirm that nations have a right to borders – Answer Yes
3. How do we define “Moral Issue” -- there are questions of right and wrong that go beyond the law.

Commissioners ranked our own issues as to inclusion in the SOC. Then we organized major topics into categories to be written. Based on those categories, we broke into subgroups to begin drafting language.

After 2 hours, we regrouped to review text prepared for the topics of Theology, Historical, Underlying Factors, and Consequences.

Individually we worked to refine the drafts.

Adjournment at 5:00 PM

Wednesday, August 22, Susan Goekler, chair convened the Commission at 8:00 a.m. Caitlin DuBois lit the chalice and shared opening words.

After Commissioners checked in about the status of the SOC drafting, we divided into small groups to work on specific sections. After 2 hours, we reconvened to check on progress, returned to the small groups, and in another 2 hours reconvened again.

After a lunch recess, we discussed the Therefore section as a whole group and then combined all the sections. After an afternoon break, we discussed the Actions section as a whole group.

Adjournment at 5:00 p.m.

On Thursday, August 23, David Breeden lit the chalice and provided opening words.

As a whole group, we read through the draft SOC so far. Then throughout the day, we reviewed each section, checking for internal consistency and ensuring that we covered the points we agreed to include on Tuesday.

David May lit the Chalice and provided the opening reading on **Friday, August 24**.

We review the Standing on the Side of Love webpage on immigration to ensure we captured all its points. We noted that it referred to legislative ministries, visiting detention centers, covenant groups, blogs, congregational-based community organizing, and service Projects. Its issues include

- a. Path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants here
- b. Churches provide scholarships or financial aid for Dream eligible immigrants
- c. Refer to Interfaith Worker Justice, Standing on the Side of Love, Turning the Tide

We incorporated the above topics into the Draft SOC, and then read the Draft SOC aloud, making additional refinements.

We returned to the post-GA CSW Meeting Notes and revisited procedures to advocate for in the 2013 AIW Process. We reviewed assignments for each Commissioner.

Susan agreed to create a poll and send it out once we return home to determine a weekend in March when we could meet, if needed to revise the Draft SOC, judge sermon submittals, and plan for GA.

After we checked out, we extinguished the chalice with some closing words.

We adjourned at noon.