

Commission on Appraisal 2019 Annual Report

The Commission on Appraisal began its current study on the topic of "covenant" in April 2018. There was much vigorous and spirited debate among the commissioners on how to proceed following the report on Class.

This topic arose after several deep conversations exploring and questioning the events of 2017 that affected the senior leadership of the UUA and resulted in the three co-presidents. We felt that had senior UUA leadership taken their covenants with one another and the institution seriously, perhaps, the UUA President, Rev. Peter Morales, and the Chief Operating Officer, Rev. Harlan Limpert, may not have taken actions that led to their resignations.

Likewise, for the events that deeply affected the Southern Region. Had the individuals involved in the hiring decisions taken their covenants seriously, the resignations, accusations of racism and favoritism, and disruptions on the UUA Board may have been averted.

Additionally, had there been serious attention paid to covenants between lead ministers and their junior or staff ministers of color, perhaps, there would not be such a trail of tears amongst ministers of color that resulted from being fired. Other religious professionals of color were similarly affected. In these cases, colleagues in covenant could have worked out their differences with attention to maintaining covenant in order to preserve their collegial relationships, and more importantly, enable sustainable ministries for UU religious professionals of color.

We also polled congregations throughout the UUA to gain their perspective on what is in need of investigation and urgent. The responses were varied, including aforementioned topics and others, such as democracy in the UUA, reaching out to millennials and examining our Bylaws. We drilled down to the umbrella topic of covenant. For us, covenant is the central binding means to Unitarian Universalist identity. It distinguishes our movement as a faith and expresses our highest aspirations.

We realize that there have been many efforts to examine covenant in our movement. Notably, Rev. Susan Ritchie led a taskforce that generated a significant report. Also, the Commission on Institutional Change, led by Rev. Leslie Takahashi, has studied the nature of covenant throughout our movement and has commented on their findings in their reports. These have been worthy efforts. Still, we believe there is more work to be done.

As such, we have enlisted the help of a UU social scientist to help us conduct a barrier analysis, which is designed to examine what facilitates covenants in UU congregations and determine what are the significant barriers, or roadblocks. This work will help us identify concrete steps that can be taken to re-invigorate the use of covenants throughout the movement.

We also want to demonstrate and call attention to "the power of covenant" and how covenants can transform us as UUs and shape our ministries from headquarters level to individual UUs seeking to live out their faith commitments at the deepest and most

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profound ways. Thus, the report will contain a broad examination of what covenant is and how it affects Unitarian Universalism, the results of the barrier analysis, and conclusions on how we might harvest the power of covenant as we move into the future.

We anticipate completing the report on covenant by the 2021 General Assembly.

Thank you on behalf of the commission,

Rev. Xolani Kacela, Ph.D.

Chair, Commission on Appraisal