



Commission on Social Witness Meeting

Notes – Conference Call

April 11, 2016

Present: Susan Goekler, Chair, Richard Bock, Caitlin Cotter, and Christina Sillari

Absent: Jyaphia Christos- Rodgers

During the faux chalice lighting, we took a moment to send healing energy to Jyaphia and her sister. We then checked-in.

The minutes of the March 18, 2016 meeting were approved as presented. Richard agreed to be secretary and Caitlin volunteered to be our process observer.

1. Old business:

- a. Engaging Escalating Inequality: No update. Christina noted that the Social Justice Sermon Contest winner's worship service and the Escalating Inequality Workshops are scheduled at the same time at this year's GA and Christina is scheduled to be at both. Christina and Caitlin will work on the worship and Susan will work with Christina on the Escalating Inequality workshop.
- b. The CSAI Process: At the request of someone struggling to provide comments by the deadline, the CSW reviewed the deadlines and timeline for the work that must occur. Seeing no way to adjust enough to relieve the tight timeline, we kept the deadlines as they are for now and remove the issue from the agenda.
- c. Selecting CSAIs at GA: In previous years there was sometimes confusion between the messages at the CSAI mini-assemblies and on the General Session floor. This year, Susan will confirm the process for the General Sessions with the Moderator and head teller. We will ask to be present for the teller orientation at the beginning of GA.

To help delegates decide whether an issue is one that has not been addressed recently, we will print in the "CSW Alert" the titles of all the SOC's adopted since 1999.

- d. Issues to be raised at the late Saturday afternoon GA session sponsored by the UUA Board and CSW: Susan prepared a draft document that we discussed; the final points are:

Social Witness Issues for GA session from CSW's perspective: The purpose of this session is to consider whether the way we are creating statements that provide a theological rationale for a denominational position on a social justice issue as well as a call to action is the best way to do so. We will start by explaining the current process – CSAI and SOC and for AIWs and then posing issues we have identified, soliciting comments and concerns from the participants.

CSW's identified issues:

- 1) Delegates selecting an issue for consideration often have no knowledge of or familiarity with previously developed statements, so issues on which we have no position might be missed while we revisit an issue on which we have already spoken.
- 2) We have no way of amending, updating, or archiving previously adopted statements.
- 3) We don't know how congregations are using already adopted statements as they engage in social justice work. They are not bound by the statements.
- 4) Amount of time spend during GAs on AIWs distorts the breadth of support and discernment on the statement.
- 5) Even with AIWs, we cannot be responsive to emerging issues in a timely way.
- 6) There is no provision for (or possibility of) fact-checking AIWs prior to adoption.
- e. We discussed the content as well as how to present the information – a hand-out or projection.

We recognized the confusion between AIWs and CSAIs/SOCs, so Susan agreed to draft something we could handout explaining the distinction.

2. Proposal to suspend AIWs in 2017:
The proposed UUA bylaws amendment to suspend AIWs for 2017 has been posted on the UUA website. The CSW needs to prepare talking points for GA 2016.
3. Staffing update: no one at this time. Richard offered to contact someone he knew.
4. GA CSW Volunteers update: There has been a cut in hours/time to 18 hours for 2016. CSW will get six volunteers. To help CSW this year because we did not budget for that reduction in time, the UUA agreed to comp one volunteer for CSW so the CSW will pay GA registration for five people and the UUA for a sixth.
5. Assignment updates:
Training for AIW mini-assembly facilitators: CSW needs to create a script for AIW Mini-Assemblies so that we are all on the same page as we lead Mini-Assemblies. Caitlin will work on a draft. Susan will get names to Caitlin of people Jim Key has identified as possible trainers.
6. Next Meeting: The CSW will have a conference call on Monday evening May 9th.
7. Process Observer: Caitlin shared that the biggest concern was the technical issues involved in our Skype- type meetings gets in the way of the process.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Bock, Pro tem