

Report to the Board on the April 2010 General Assembly Planning Committee (GAPC) Meeting

The GAPC met April 8-11, 2010 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the site of the 2010 General Assembly. The meeting included a reception for local ministers and congregation leaders, GA volunteer committee members, and Prairie Star District staff on Thursday afternoon and a tour of the convention center on Saturday morning.

Registration. As of early April, registration for GA was 1,174 compared to 1,153 at this time last year. This does not include 387 applications for volunteer positions, about 200 of which will have their registrations waived. Projecting registration before the end of April is difficult because many people register later in the month to avoid the May 1 fee increase. The GAPC has budgeted for 3,200 paid registrants and hopes for 3,800. This year's program is outstanding (see program posting on GAPC website). Trustees can be helpful by promoting GA attendance in their districts through personal invitations, newsletters, annual meetings, and other communication strategies.

Networking sessions. This year the GAPC is offering space on Friday and Saturday for informal discussion groups. More than 40 requests have already been received and all slots might be booked before GA convenes. Presenters/facilitators of these groups will be asked to report on attendance and effectiveness of this experiment.

GA Feedback. The post-GA data collection form posted online for GA attendees will be a "feedback survey" instead of an "evaluation." The survey will focus on the impact of GA upon attendees, such as how well they felt that programming prepared them to share stronger skills and practices for congregational growth or enhanced their vision for shared ministry. Instead scheduling a session to receive feedback, the GAPC will solicit feedback daily in the exhibit hall for an hour during lunch break. They invite Trustees to join them to increase Board visibility and promote owner linkage.

Conference call with Peter Morales. A conference call with UUA President Morales addressed his thoughts about the future of the GAPC; how the Fifth Principle Task Force report relates to his vision for GA; preparation for the 2010 GA, the 2011 GA, and the celebration of the Association's 50th anniversary; and recommendations for future Ware lecturers.

Program development process. The GAPC in a conference call with Harlan Limpert agreed that the 2010 program development process, which was carried out by a Program Development Group consisting of staff and GAPC representatives, merited repeating next year. To reduce confusion all applications for workshops will have the same November 15 deadline, including Board slots. Gini and I agreed that the process had worked well for the Board of Trustees and that the number of slots was adequate. Program planners will aim to develop program tracks that reflect Board Ends.

Response to proposed bylaw amendments. The GAPC held a "deep chair" conversation on Friday night to discuss proposed bylaw amendments that would remove GAPC

functions from the bylaws and remove election of the GAPC by GA delegates. After a lengthy, thoughtful exchange, the GAPC agreed to approve the following motion:

1. The GAPC recommends to the Board that Bylaw responsibility for functions related to GA agenda preparation should be transferred from the Planning Committee to the Board, as indicated in proposed revisions to Sections 4.11-4.14 and related rules, thus bringing the Bylaws into alignment with current practice.
2. The GAPC recommends that it retain the capacity to submit items to the GA agenda, as currently provided in Sections 4.14(c) and 15.2.
3. The GAPC recommends that no change in its status as an elected standing committee be made at this time.

The rationale for these recommendations is as follows:

“The GAPC recognizes that it has not recently exercised the role of agenda formation assigned to it by the Bylaws and Rules, and that the Bylaws should be changed to place these responsibilities with the Board, in closer alignment with the Board's governance role and with current practice. However, we do not feel that the Planning Committee should be removed from the Bylaws as an elected standing committee until and unless such action is taken in an overall context of thoughtfully planned governance change, and until or unless a defined role, purview, selection process, and accountability for a successor entity has been established and a transition planned. As an elected committee, we feel we should retain the capacity to submit resolutions and proposed amendments to the agenda (as do the CSW and COA). We also feel that we should retain our responsibilities for GA programs and arrangements.

We are not only open to but committed to examining our committee's practices, mission, composition, selection, effectiveness, fiscal responsibility and accountability. This is a task we have set for ourselves, and we would like to do it in continued conversation with the Board and Administration.”

Conference call with Harlan Limpert. A conference call with Harlan Limpert, UUA Vice President of Ministries and Congregational Support, addressed plans for the public witness event in Minneapolis, scheduling of the Friday and Saturday discussion sessions, programming for GA 2011, Program Development Group staffing, the costs of programming, and plans for promoting the 50th anniversary celebration.

Meeting with Youth Caucus Staff. On Saturday the GAPC had lunch with Youth Caucus staff and their adult advisors. The youth had a number of questions for the GAPC including access to food in the convention center, what excites the GAPC about the upcoming GA, the location of the Youth Meeting Room in relation to other GA events, and what efforts were underway to make GA more multigenerational. They expressed concern about the Fifth Principle Task Force report, pointing out that Youth Caucus does not represent all youth and that GA provides the only opportunity for youth to gather as a national body. The GAPC encouraged youth to participate in the Service Project and described other options for youth activities, asked whether they anticipated any problems

and reminded them that the GAPC relies on them for positive and negative feedback. Youth expressed interest in meeting with the Board of Trustees at GA.

Conference call with Gini Courter. Issues discussed with Gini Courter, UUA Moderator, included ways she could assist at this year's GA with promoting next year's 50th anniversary celebration, plans for publicizing the optional discussion sessions on Friday and Saturday, the timing of a possible collection ("ask") during plenary, the GAPC's response to the proposed bylaw amendments, the status of Right Relations Team leadership (Garner Takahashi-Morris is the new Team Leader), and plans for owner linkage activities at GA 2011. Mention was also made that former Independent Affiliates have been informed that they will become "Related Organizations" with linkages to relevant staff groups.

Service Project. In addition to seeking funds, this year's service project will offer opportunities for hands-on service at the Hope Community, a nearby housing project, where volunteers can help out by painting, gardening, and landscaping on Friday and Saturday mornings. Tim Wilson, project coordinator, will offer orientation workshops and encourages people to bring work clothes.

Public Witness. GA coincides with the Minneapolis Gay Pride celebration, which has an anticipated participation of 200,000 people. GA Public Witness, scheduled for 11:45 am following the morning plenary, will be in support of this celebration.

GA 2011. Plans are underway for GA 2011 in Charlotte, which will also mark the 50th anniversary of the UUA. Lynda Shannon and Beth McGregor, who have been appointed liaisons to the 50th Anniversary Task Force, are addressing the need to promote GA 2011 at the 2010 GA as well as planning programming. The Ware lecturer invited by President Morales will be Karen Armstrong.

Board role at GA. The Board room will be 102 D in the Convention Center. The GAPC suggested that Trustees might welcome attendees at the door of Opening Celebration as well as joining GAPC members at the lunchtime feedback table.

Other news:

- The Board room is conveniently located at 102D in the convention center..
- This year's Ware Lecturer is Winona LaDuke, a Native American environmental activist.

Respectfully submitted,
Eva Marx, Board Liaison to the GAPC
Trustee, Ballou Channing District

