

## APPENDIX A

## SUMMARY OF DELEGATE RESPONSES TO BOARD QUESTIONS GA 2011

Total GA 2011 registration was 4081, of whom 2,059 (50.5%) were delegates. Of the 747 respondents to the GA 2011 feedback survey, 704 responded to the question regarding delegate status. Of those, 463 (66%) self-identified as delegates.

**How people became delegates.** Respondents were given four options for how they became a delegate:

- |   |     |       |
|---|-----|-------|
| • My congregation elected me  | 44  | 12.4% |
| • My congregation board elected me  | 75  | 21.1% |
| • My congregation/board approved my delegate status because I was going to GA   | 166 | 46.6% |
| • I volunteered and asked my minister or congregation president to sign my card | 71  | 19.9% |

What these numbers do not include (a serious oversight on my part) is those whose status entitles them to be delegates, e.g., ministers (an additional 50 delegate respondents), a credentialed religious educator (1), members of the UUA Board of Trustees (6). If this question is asked next year, those options need to be included. Additional comments included: Appointed by Denominational Connections Committee (6); Congregation president (apparently those congregation assume presidents will be delegates) (5); Alternates (5); responded to call for delegates and was selected; agreed among ourselves who would be delegates. One response noted that delegate election is required in the congregation's bylaws.

**Understanding of issues.** Respondents were asked to check all that applied to the question "How well did you understand the issues on which you were voting?"

- |  |     |       |
|--|-----|-------|
| • I came well prepared after reading the final agenda.   | 197 | 47.2% |
| • I attended a delegate preparation session in my congregation or district.                      | 57  | 13.7% |
| • I read the final agenda but was not clear about the issues until hearing plenary discussion.   | 159 | 38.1% |
| • I attended mini-assemblies where issues were clarified.  | 87  | 20.9% |
| • I followed discussions on e-mail lists and other electronic media where issues were clarified. | 103 | 24.7% |
| • I was still unclear when voting occurred.  | 39  | 9.4%  |

Five respondents commented that they either did not participate or did not vote. Three found the moderator's explanations helpful. Other comments included that mini-assemblies were a waste of time and difficult to attend because they conflicted with other sessions of interest. (In another section of the feedback survey, there were suggestions that mini-assemblies be scheduled in unopposed time (including during lunch) and not concurrently so that one would not have to choose among mini-assemblies. There were

also comments regarding the complexity of issues and short lead time to consider them. Some respondents were not aware that the final agenda was available electronically pre-GA.

**Time spent on discussion.** Respondents rated time spent on discussion in plenary before the vote was taken as follows:

- |              |     |       |
|--------------|-----|-------|
| • Too long   | 70  | 17.3% |
| • Just right | 290 | 71.6% |
| • Not enough | 45  | 11.1% |

Some people felt that it was difficult to generalize, i.e., it depended on the issue. A number expressed appreciation for the moderator's management of the meeting. Some felt that people were not given adequate time to speak. There were observations that democracy is necessary but can try one's patience. A few commented on excessive use of the procedural mike; one suggested that procedural questions be offered in writing. There were also requests for fewer spoken reports and more print. A couple of respondents commented on difficulty getting to a microphone in time.

**Plenary attendance.** Of the 438 people responding to this question, 186 or 42.5% attended all plenaries. Those who did not attend all plenaries, attended as follows:

- |   |     |       |
|---|-----|-------|
| • Wed.--Plenary I in conjunction with Opening | 163 | 66.3% |
| • Thu.—Plenary II, 8:00 – 8:30 am             | 110 | 44.7% |
| • Fri.—Plenary III, 8:30 – 10:15 am           | 160 | 65.0% |
| • Sat.--Plenary IV, 8:30 am – 12:00 pm        | 152 | 61.8% |
| • Sat.—Plenary V, 2:45–6:00 pm                | 154 | 62.6% |
| • Sun.—Plenary VI, 10:45 am – 1:00 pm         | 114 | 46.3% |
| • Sun.—Plenary VII, 2:00–5:00 pm              | 94  | 38.2% |

Reasons for not attending all plenaries were as follows:

- |   |     |       |
|---|-----|-------|
| • Arrived in Charlotte after GA began or left before it ended | 110 | 55.3% |
| • Preferred to meet a friend                                  | 36  | 18.1% |
| • Preparing for other GA obligations                          | 40  | 20.1% |
| • Needed a break from meetings                                | 87  | 43.7% |
| • Did not have enough time to eat                             | 37  | 18.6% |

Other reasons listed in comments included fatigue, too early or oversleeping, finding plenary unpleasant or tedious, or wanting to tour the city. One person commented that the program did not include the plenary agenda; some education might be needed about obtaining the agenda. Several people noted that alternates replaced them.

**Guidance from congregation.** Respondents reported that their congregations

• Instructed them how to vote	4	1.0%
• Discussed the issues but left the decision on voting to their discretion	99	23.8%
• Gave them no input	313	75.2%

Some delegates reported that they were instructed on the Ethical Eating SOC. Others were told to vote their conscience. One respondent reported that the congregation's bylaws specify that delegates not be instructed.

**Informing congregations.** When asked how respondents intend to inform their congregations about what occurred in plenary sessions, they responded as follows (checking all that applied):

• Newsletter article	209	62.4%
• Worship service	172	51.3%
• Special congregation meeting	48	14.3%
• E-mail list	66	19.7%
• Facebook, blog, other electronic media	74	22.1%

A number commented that they were unsure or had not yet decided. Others were reporting to their board or relevant committees or engaging in informal conversations. A couple planned to post detailed reports on their websites.

**Making plenary more meaningful.** Delegates were asked to suggest one way in which the Board could make plenary more meaningful to delegate's congregations (252 responses). They clearly want help with promoting GA and UUA governance in their congregations and they want to arrive at GA well informed.

- Pre-GA education/communication to inform delegates and their congregations, including more information about governance/polity, what GA and plenaries are and their significance. Respondents wanted help with engaging their congregations. They wanted materials much earlier, suggesting opportunities for education throughout the year to generate interest. Tools and materials suggested included prepackaged programs such as a study guide, series of brief articles for insertion in newsletters, PowerPoint, YouTube, DVD, or video; bulleted summary, pros and cons on issues, not relying on uninformed e-mail discussions; UU World articles; posts on Facebook and Twitter; place agenda issues in a single document online. Provide a one-pager of Robert's Rules.
- Shorten plenaries. Eliminate reports, awards, etc., and limit content to business.
- Make sessions shorter, e.g., no more than a total of four hours each of two days.
- Encourage/promote offsite participation. Live stream sessions and encourage more people to watch.
- Communications during and post-GA, sharing actions on issues, pros and cons, and outcomes/voting results. Daily YouTube reports. Provide plans and suggestions for congregational follow-up activities post-GA. Monthly tip sheets discussing some aspect of a recent GA.

## 2011 GA Evaluation Summary

- At the end of each plenary session, offer an upbeat introduction of what to expect at the next session.
- Clarify how decisions made in plenary affect congregational life. Report how restructuring has improved board efficiency and any resulting new ideas.
- Eliminate, reduce, or reform AIWs.
- Schedule mini-assemblies so they do not conflict with programs.
- Find ways to get our congregations to pay attention, perhaps identify congregational advocates for GA. Create a list serve for congregation presidents providing information for them to share with their boards. Send regular communications to congregation presidents.
- More consideration of our core values and ends and ways our congregations connect.
- Have mentors for new delegates.
- Number sections in plenary hall so that people can find each other.
- On printed agenda, greying out instead of striking out text.
- Provide space up front for people in scooters so that they can see and have access to microphones.
- Refreshments and stretch breaks.
- Separate plenary from GA. (I think this means separating governance from programs.) Conduct business during two days preceding GA. Some respondents were not interested in governance and wanted either more social justice or more congregational programming. Some suggested eliminating plenary or letting the Board govern.
- Reduce number of delegates to make participation more affordable for congregations.

**NOTE:** Appendix A includes responses to a section in the GA 2011 feedback survey requested by the Board of Trustees to gather information from delegates. It was included in a report titled “General Assembly (GA) 2011 Feedback Summary” submitted by Eva Marx, August 2011.