

Report to the UUA Board
Religious Education Credentialing Committee (RECC)
Rev. Will Saunders, Liaison
December 14, 2008

This report on the work of the Religious Education Credentialing Committee may or may not fit into the Policy Governance mold, but until there is clarity as to the appropriateness of such a report, I will continue to prepare them. The RECC is, as its name implies, the UUA's credentialing body for religious educators. It meets twice yearly, once in conjunction with LREDA's annual get together and once in Boston. It is staffed by Beth Williams in MPL. Some of the background information on the RECC is contained in my report last year at this time; in the interest of space and your time, I will not repeat that here.

The RECC met in Albuquerque, NM October 27-30, 2008. The agenda consisted of four basic areas:

- Reports, communications and getting us back up to speed and on the same page -- from Gail Forsyth-Vail, Chair, Beth Miller, MPL Director, Beth Williams, RECC staff, on conversations with LREDA.
- Preparation, interview with candidates and debrief.
- Review of the credentialing process with suggestions for changes
- AR/AO/MC experience

I shall review each of the four areas.

- Gail Forsyth-Vail anticipated leaving the committee in order to take a job with the UUA in Lifespan Education, so her report was a good-bye. Beth Williams reported these items which may be of interest to the Board: 38 active participants in the program (11 seeking Masters level; 19 seeking Credentialed level; 8 seeking Associate level), 4 candidates on hold status, 5 candidates have withdrawn from program, 6 candidates scheduled to meet with RECC in April, 2009. Beth wrote,

I am still concerned with the number of candidates leaving the program and suspect the UUA senior administration will share this concern at some point. The program is expensive to run for the number of candidates in it and the small number being credentialed. I continue to hear that the program is a 'moving target' and that the Masters level is too rigorous (with more competency areas than the MFC requires for credentialing ministers, for example). Beth Miller and I recently met with Anne Bancroft, President of LREDA, who expressed similar concerns. Anne believes that there is no longer excitement and engagement with the program in the field, and wants to work with my office to do more outreach to all religious educators.

- The Committee met with one candidate and awarded him his credential.

- The RECC consults with LREDA to design a credentialing process which meets the needs of an appropriate amount of rigor and still serves the best long term interests of both our congregations and those persons in the process. Finding the appropriate balance is a challenge, and one that the RECC works hard to strike. The upshot of our meeting in October was the decision to initiate some changes in the requirements for the Masters and Credentialed levels. Those changes include an adjustment in the competency areas and an increased recognition that long-term experience in the field should hold more water than it has in the past. I am impressed with the way the RECC wrestles with these issues. They are willing to review and revise requirements when the need arises. The committee engaged in some small group work and was highly intent on process (as you might expect with RE folk), with the result that some proposed changes will be vetted with appropriate stakeholders.
- The RECC spent a morning at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque as its AR/AO/MC experience and it was a fabulous morning. The Executive Director is a member of the UU Church in Albuquerque and rolled out the red carpet. A staff member explored the Day of the Dead with us, as we met in late October. It was excellent. I learned about Peruvian-Japanese trade going back to the nineteenth century. It was entirely new to me and fascinating. I was struck by how the Committee was able to take advantage of our meeting location to engage in an AR/AO/MC experience that would not have otherwise been available. It was a valuable lesson, a sort of AR/AO/MC version of think globally, act locally. I would recommend this sort of engagement to other committees of the UUA.

In sum, it was a good meeting, but there are issues just below the surface which need airing. Our RE credentialing process is expensive on a per candidate basis. Enthusiasm for RE credentialing seems to be waning. And as Dan Brody has indicated over the past few years, our RE enrollment seems to be declining. I believe that the Board should look carefully at our efforts in Religious Education and address some of these issues. The work of the RECC is one place where some underlying concerns are exposed, but the issues are not just those of the RECC, but of the association at large.

I enjoy the work of this committee. They work hard and well. It is a pleasure to represent the Board on the RECC.