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Report to the UUA Board of Trustees, Congregations and Covenanted Communities

You will read this report as a testament to the leadership of Jim Key; in fact, it is. Jim led the Board of Trustees and our Association through a very turbulent year, and with the strong support of the Board members and hundreds of you reading this report, we rose up to meet many challenges and celebrated positive achievements. Jim's legacy in leading so much of this work speaks for itself.

Congregational and other visits made by Jim Key

- July 20-22, 2016 Madison, WI UUMN Conference
- September 11-17, 2016 Boston, MA GAMAP, GAPC meetings
- September 18, 2016 Brunswick, GA Rev. Jane Page installation
- October 1-3, 2016 Lansing, MI Governance Workshop, Building Dedication
- October 29, 2016 River Road UU; participated in "Trustee Day" training for six area congregations' boards
- December 3, 2016 Met with MFC to observe interview process
- January 13, 2017 Met with GAPC regarding both NOLA and KC GAs for 2017 and 2018
- January 14, 2017 Delivered Key Note for the 150th Anniversary celebration of 5 congregations in Cleveland
- January 15, 2017 Preached at First Unitarian Church of Cleveland and met with board
- January 22, 2017 Preached at UUs of the Susquehanna (PA)
- February 5 Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists, Williamsburg VA, participated in building dedication
- February 11, 2017 Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda MD, participated in Leadership Reception

- February 25, 2017 Facilitated the Presidential Candidate Forum and lead a class in *Governance as Leadership*, Pacific Northwest District, Eugene, OR
- April 1, 2017 Facilitated the Presidential Candidate Forum, Central East Region, Bethesda MD
- April 8, 2017 Facilitated the Presidential Candidate Forum, Southern Region, Charleston SC
- April 13, 2017 Reported UUA Board actions and introduced the Interim Co-President Team, Boston, MA
- April 21-23, 2017 UUA Board meeting, Boston, MA
- April 28-29 Mid America Regional Assembly

Narrative

GA 2016

Following General Assembly 2016 in Columbus, OH, Moderator Key connected with a number of stakeholders to review concerns that arose around various aspects of GA:

- *Berry Street Essay* offered by Rev. Gail Seavey on clergy boundaries and misconduct.
- *Responsive Resolution* offered by Youth sponsors, supporting BLUU, to gain insights to their hopes and dreams as the Board of Trustees considers its response to the resolution. (An update on the Resolution can be found in the appendix to this report.)
- *Debate and Voting Process* – Moderator Key met with several groups who support bylaw changes that would reduce dependence on debating under Roberts Rules of Order as delegates discern and embrace social justice and other actions.

The board provided funding for scholarships at GA 2016. The objective of the scholarship program was to encourage people of color, youth, young adults, and the economically fragile to be named delegates from congregations. The program was moderately successful with 87 scholarships awarded. A post-GA survey indicated that 72% percent identified as financially insecure and 50% received no financial assistance from their congregations. 36% of the recipients were people of color, 35% percent were non-cisgender/straight, 17% were youth, and 55% were either non-white, non-cisgender/straight, or both; 17% were youth and 47% percent were young adults. This data indicates mixed results with more work to do to encourage greater inclusion at General Assembly.

Black Lives of UU (BLUU)

Since our historic October board meeting when the board approved a commitment of \$5.3 million to Black Lives Unitarian Universalism (BLUU), the staff along, with the Moderator, have been in discernment on how best to support BLUU's efforts. BLUU leadership focused on planning the very successful Convening in March in New Orleans and is now focusing on organizational and financial plans. Currently, the UUA financial staff is acting as Fiscal Agent without fee for BLUU. The board is committed to the \$5.3MM guarantee and the relationship will continue to evolve and grow. Members of the board made initial, personal contributions of \$54,000 for BLUU and continue to build relationships as organizational and financial plans develop.

Presidential Candidates Forums

Working with the Board Secretary, Chair of Election Campaign Practices Committee, and Congregational Life staff, the board hosted five candidate forums, with four of them facilitated by Moderator Key and one facilitated by Rev Manish Mishra Marzetti. The forums took place in conjunction with regional or district meetings and were well-received by participants.

Staff Leadership Changes

In a recent Moderator's report, Jim Key commented that "the... turbulent events and resignations (of President Rev. Peter Morales, Executive Vice President Rev. Harlan Limpert, and Director of Congregational Life Rev. Scott Taylor) have resulted in a great deal of heartbreak, uncertainty, and anxiety throughout our movement. People of color throughout our Association, especially religious professionals of color, and those on the UUA staff, have been deeply affected. I want to thank our Sources of Authority for communicating with the board and me. We have received hundreds of emails representing thousands of UUs, religious professionals, congregations, and organizations... Thank you for the bottom of my heart, particularly to the people of color on staff for holding the center."

After the Board worked through many hours of discussion and discernment, the following was moved, seconded and implemented:

In pursuit of the UUA Interim Presidential Transition Plan the board appoints a co-equal, three-person Presidential Transition Team to serve together and in collaboration to fulfill the obligation outlined in the Plan: Sofia Betancourt, William G.

Sinkford, and Leon Spencer. Sofia Betancourt will serve as Interim Co-President for the Commission for Institutional Change, William G. Sinkford will serve as Interim Co-President for the roles of President as outlined in the UUA Bylaws, and Leon Spencer will serve as Interim Co-President of Constituent Outreach. All will serve in a Pastoral Care role.

Following the appointment of the co-presidents, the Board was made aware of over \$500,000 in financial commitments in the form of severance packages made to the recently-resigned staff leaders. The packages far exceeded acceptable limits. While legally obligated to meet the terms of the commitments, work continues, as of this writing, to renegotiate the terms of the severance packages to mitigate the financial impact. The Board will not only review the policies and practices related to such financial commitments, but, more importantly, focus on the systemic and structural constructs of power and privilege that enabled this to happen.

The co-presidents have accomplished a great deal in a short period of time, including implementing interim hiring procedures, beginning the foundations and staffing of the Commission on Institutional Change, and reaching out to dozens of stakeholders for the purposes of linkage and pastoral care. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their tireless efforts.

White Supremacy Teach In

In response to the issues of racism and white supremacy raised in recent hiring practices, three devoted colleagues, Aisha Hauser, Christina Rivera and Kenny Wiley co-created the White Supremacy Teach-In for use in congregations throughout the UUA. Over 750 congregations participated to raise awareness and begin difficult discussions around these issues. Many congregations are carrying this work forward to keep the conversations going. *Although not a board activity*, we are grateful for this work that shows the power of who we can be.

Moderator Nominating Committee

Rev. Chip Roush will convene the newly-appointed committee at GA in New Orleans. The board is approving a charge to the Committee as they begin their work for the 2019 election. In the meantime, a small committee of board members is working to make a recommendation to the full Board of Trustees for an appointed interim moderator until General Assembly 2018, where an election will be held for an acting moderator, as called for in our bylaws:

1083 **Article VIII Section 8.7. Vacancies.**

1084 (a) Elected Officers. A vacancy created by the death,
1085 disqualification, resignation, or removal of an elected officer
1086 shall be filled by majority vote of the Board of Trustees. An
1087 individual appointed to fill a vacancy shall serve until the
1088 vacancy is filled by regular or special election.

1312 **Article IX, Section 9.12. Special Elections.**

1313 If a vacancy occurs more than 630 days before the expiration of the
1314 term of an elected officer, an elected member of a standing
1315 committee of the Association, or a trustee, a special election shall
1316 be held to fill the balance of the unexpired term. The special election
1317 shall be held at the next regular General Assembly that begins at
1318 least 270 days after the date of the vacancy.

Until an interim Moderator is named, Denise Rimes is serving as convener of the Board of Trustees' meetings.

This has been a year of extraordinary change. The change has been difficult, and many have experienced deep pain and disruption. As we look in the rearview mirror at the past twelve months, there are things we would do differently, and things we have learned. But so many people and communities have stayed in the struggle and discomfort, with the faith that the voices of people of color will be heard and systems will evolve to move us closer to Beloved Community. In just a matter of days, our leadership will change as we elect a new President and name a new Moderator. There has never been a time when our faith has been riper for major cultural and systemic change. May those voices continue to lead and guide us, and may our uncertainty and anxiety serve as reminder of the work to be done and the possibilities ahead.

Blessed be.

Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly 2017 Update on 2016 Responsive Resolution

In 2016, the delegates of the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association adopted the following resolutions:

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees issue a multi-year report on the board, staff, congregational and denominational responses to Black Lives Matter, and particularly examines the year-to-year growth in the responses at General Assemblies 2017, 2018, and 2019.

While much has happened since 2016, there is much yet to do. The summary of activities in this report is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the work remaining. Our civil rights forebears knew that their work would not be completed in their lifetimes, and we carry that spirit forward on the long road to truth and reconciliation.

Board activities/actions

- **October Board Meeting**

- The Revs. Hope Johnson and Josh Pawelek expertly guided the Board through a series of exercises aimed at reflecting on the Board's commitment and vision in regards to anti-racism, anti-oppression, multicultural (ARAOMC) explorations of our systems of privilege, power, and oppression as well as how to go from ideology to making it real in the Board's internal work processes. The Board affirmed its ongoing commitment to ARAOMC and sought to put those ideas into practice throughout the ensuing days of meetings.
- October 14, 2016 was an historic day in Unitarian Universalism. The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Board of Trustees affirmed our ongoing solidarity with, and support of, the Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism organizing collective (BLUU). In a passionate discussion that included calls for attention to the beauty and religious nature of this work, the Board allocated \$300,000.00 of immediate support for BLUU, as well as \$5,000,000.00 in long-term funding, guaranteed by the endowment against future fundraising. The presentation by Leslie Mac and Rev. Carlton Elliott Smith included both history of the movement and plans for the proposed funding. BLUU will be sharing their vision in upcoming months. This commitment is just one step in a

long journey towards fulfilling promises made to Black Unitarian Universalists in the 1960s. The Board is fully committed to working collaboratively with the UUA administration to develop the funding sources necessary for this financial support of BLUU. The discussion ended with a laying-on of hands and prayer for the continued work of all those who are giving so much of their lives to building the beloved community.

- **January Board meeting**

- Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, Director of Stewardship and Development, announced that the Board had pledged over \$50,000 in anticipation of a new campaign in support of Black Lives Unitarian Universalist and the larger racial justice work.
- The meeting ended with a deep and thoughtful conversation reaffirming our passionate support for Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism. We reviewed the process that led to the decision to provide \$5.3 million dollars in funding, expressed our appreciation for the excellent work of the staff in moving the effort forward, and [pledged to be the most effective partner possible in helping the vision of Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism to be fulfilled.](#)

- **April Board meeting**

- By the April Board meeting, Peter Morales, Harlan Limpert, and Scott Taylor had submitted their resignations. A good deal of conversation centered on the appointment of the co-presidents, especially on their tasks of creating interim hiring policies, establishing a Commission for Institutional Change, and constituency outreach. Moderator Key, in his report, provided strong support for the Board's use of terms like white supremacy, and pledged, on behalf of the Board, that we would continue to change our framework to further the efforts around dismantling white supremacy and racism. In particular, Moderator Key continued to build relationships with BLUU "as their organizational and financial plans become clearer."

Staff activities/actions

- Every print issue of ***UU World*** in FY2017 has included prominent articles highlighting racial justice work and the experiences of UUs of color

- A cover story (“The Dream of White Innocence”) and two feature stories
- News stories about BLUU
- Profiles of black and Japanese-American UUs
- Fine art, a personal essay, and a poem by black contributors
- In all, racial justice or the personal experience of people of color was the subject of 17 print articles.
- Photo choices have put black or POCI leadership in the foreground several times in every issue
- The online magazine has covered the UU White Supremacy Teach-In, provided extensive and detailed news coverage of the Board of Trustees conversations about institutional racism, and featured a black guest columnist on Kwanzaa.
- **Standing on the Side of Love (SSL)** has built several key partnerships with BLUU
 - Partnered with BLUU (and Rev. Sekou and the Holy Ghost) to sponsor Revive Love Tours in 5 cities. These tours combined community-based performance with networking and coaching for organizers engaged in the Movement for Black Lives. Lena Gardner was also contracted through CLF to work with SSL in coordinating these events that grew out of organizers identifying a need for spiritual fortification.
 - Fortification is also the brand of the podcast series initiated by SSL as a platform where faith-based organizers share the spiritual grounding for their movement work. In FY18, SSL and the Auburn Seminary will co-host the series 2 of the Fortification podcast with a primary focus on organizers engaged in the Movement for Black Lives.
 - In FY17, 30 Days of Love (MLK Holiday Weekend through Valentine’s Day weekend) included Movement for Black Lives resources for UU congregations. SSL has produced webinars to help UUs and the UU-friendly understand the context of current anti-racism work that brings the intersectional analysis that informs the Movement for Black Lives.
 - SSL participated in the conference sponsored by Mijente in March 2017 that brought together Movement for Black Lives organizers with organizers engaged in justice work with the transgender, immigrant, and queer community to expand the understanding of sanctuary in the context of the Trump administration. This convening informed the strategy for expanded sanctuary in the UUA-UUSC Conscience Campaign.

Congregations

- Unitarian Universalists (UUs) are exploring how to **visibly show our support** for the Movement for Black Lives—through community partnerships, education, social justice actions, and more. Access to resources provided by BLUU and the UUA staff have been used extensively. Over 160 congregations, for example, have hung Black Lives Matter banners, some multiple times.
- Over 750 congregations have engaged in the **White Supremacy Teach-In**. The ongoing conversations inspired by the teach-in continue to grow. An even more important lesson is the significant amount of work that three people did (Aisha Howard, Christina Rivera and Kenny Wiley) in a very short period of time that resulted in widespread adoption and conversation.
- Alongside banner displays, many congregations are **holding and attending vigils** for people killed by police violence, starting study groups and anti-racism education workshops and engaging with UU-led efforts in support of the movement from Black Lives of UU and Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM). Many congregations and UU State Action Networks have also begun working with local Black Lives Matter and Standing Up for Racial Justice chapters, the Moral Monday Forward Together Movement, and Congregation-Based Community Organizations.

We have much work yet to do. Our policies, our words and our deeds often fall short of Beloved Community. The actions taken since last year represent only a fraction of the road left to travel. As Rev. Bill Sinkford reminded us in the foreword to the book The Arc of the Universe is Long,

Do we not ultimately want our faith to look like the world in which we live?...We must honor and celebrate the presence of those voices [African American and other communities], those persons. But we cannot ignore the formative nature of the black-white paradigm that informs so much of our conversation about race, ethnicity, and culture. There is knowing and healing about our national and personal history that is long overdue.

May it be so.