

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
Commission on Appraisal



October Meeting, 2007  
Boston, MA

MINUTES

Friday, October 19th

**Present:** Tom Owen-Towle, Don Mohr, Bev Harrison, Jacqui Williams, Pete Fontneu, Orlando Brugnola, Megan Dowdell, Barbara Child, Michael Ohlrogge

The day began at 9:00 AM with a worship service led by Tom.

**Macro Questions:** The Commission moved into consideration of a number of broad questions concerning the direction of the Article II project. From this, the Commission decided that all options should remain on the table concerning changing Article II or keeping it the same.

**Decision Making Process:** The Commission then moved into consideration of how decisions on the project and its outcomes would be made. After examining past decision making procedures and weighing concerns of inclusiveness versus expediency in decision-making, the Commission came up with this broad framework:

“Mindful of the words of Francis David who understood that “We need not think alike to love alike,” we acknowledge the diverse identities, minds and talents of the Commissioners. In our deliberations, we will listen attentively, respectfully and sensitively, affirming differences while we seek to build agreement. When our thoughts diverge, we will invite one another to consider the ways in which we might make agreement possible. Should that not be possible, we will respect the option of a minority report. We will lift up the concerns of those less heard in our movement in order that our work may better encourage spiritual growth in our congregations.”

**Working Groups:** The Commission then moved into a consideration of continuing work on the Article II project as a whole or breaking into working groups. The Commission decided to divide into two working groups of four people, with Barbara Child, as Project Manager

facilitating the work of the two groups but not being part of either. The groups will consider different proposed revisions to Article II. They will work independently and report on their findings at the January meeting.

**Timeline for Project & Draft:** The Commission considered attempting to issue a preliminary draft ahead of the bylaws required deadline, but decided that this would not be feasible.

**Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression Training:** The Commission was joined by Tracey Robinson-Harris and Taquina Boston from UUA Staff for a training in accountability through an anti-racist, anti-oppressive lens. The Commission grappled with what accountability might look like in its current project. The Commission agreed that this is of the utmost of importance and that it will be a primary concern of the working groups as they advance on their work of considering potential options for Article II.

**Evaluating Input:** The Commission discussed how to evaluate all of the different input it is receiving on Article II, as well as what kind of documentation it will give for any decisions it makes. Members noted that relatively little explanation and documentation accompanied the proposal of the current principles and purposes. Members agreed that the Commission this time can do better. The Commission decided that weight should be given to input on account of both how often it comes up with people as well as how much merit the ideas have. Thus, the Commission may decide to adopt suggestions advanced by a relatively small number of people if it deems them to be in the overall best and longterm interests of the religion.

**Congregational Use of Article II:** The Commission decided that although it is very interested in how Article II is used in congregational life, it would not be feasible or prudent in this current endeavor to attempt to influence directly how the current or potential future versions of Article II are used. This will have to be left up to the individual congregations.

**Aspirational and Inspirational:** The Commission decided that having a document that captures the aspirations of Unitarian Universalists and that has the potential to inspire them is something that will be an important consideration in its work.

**Content and Form:** The Commission decided that matters of both the content of Article II as well as its form (how “poetic” or “inspiring” it is) are important matters for it to take up in this study.

**Structure of Article II:** The Commission then went into a brainstorming session considering the current structure of Article II (arrangement of content, etc.) as well as various proposals for changes. The Commission agreed that the structure of the document is a very important component of it.

**Input from Identity Groups:** Looking back on the training by Taquina and Tracey, the Commission discussed ways to ensure that different identity groups within UUism have a voice in the Article II review process. The Commission decided to create an additional online instrument for individuals to give input who might be left out of congregational life due to their identities. The Commission will advertise this instrument on all of the known UUA listserves for

different identity groups. This includes both identities such as race, sexual orientation, and gender as well as theological and other identity groups.

**Final Matters:** The Commission ended this meeting with discussion of thank-you notes to people who have so far helped with the process and a look forward to future meetings. Here is the Commission's future meeting schedule:

2008: January 24-27 – Boston  
2008: March 27-31\* – Chicago  
2008: June 25-29 – GA in Ft. Lauderdale  
2008: August 7-10\*\* – Barbara will find some possibilities.  
2008: October 23-26 – Boston  
2009: January 22-25 - Boston  
2009: March 26-29 – Boston

Respectfully Submitted,  
-Michael Ohlrogge, Secretary  
UUA Commission on Appraisal

\*After the meeting, this was changed to March 27-30.

\*\*After the meeting, this was changed to August 14-17