

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Commission on Appraisal



April Meeting, 2010
Boston, MA

Minutes

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Thursday, April 22nd

Present: Erica Baron, Barbara Child, Pete Fontneau, Bev Harrison, Nana Kratochvil, Don Mohr, Michael Ohlrogge, Jacqui Williams

The Commission approved the minutes & study notes from the January 2010 meeting, with correction that the study notes should reflect 300 responses to the CoA survey.

Report from Board Meeting:

Erica Baron, Jacqui Williams and Barbara Child gave a report from their participation in the UUA Board of Trustees on the weekend of April 16-18th. The Board had several sessions on the Commission on Appraisal. These included a historical presentation on the Commission, a small group discussion of the Commission during a lunch, and several sessions in which the board made decisions regarding the Commission. During each of these, Commission members present were able to help educate the board about the work of the Commission and its place in the UUA Bylaws. The Board voted to classify the Commission under the category of “governance” for its policy governance model. The Commission also voted to increase the 2010-2011 budget for the Commission to \$24,000, up from the \$5,000 originally proposed by the UUA Administration.

Friday, April 23rd

Present: Erica Baron, Barbara Child, Pete Fontneau, Bev Harrison, Nana Kratochvil, Don Mohr, Michael Ohlrogge, Jacqui Williams

Peter Morales Meeting:

Peter Morales, newly elected president of the UUA, joined the Commission’s meeting at Pickett and Elliot House. The Commission and Peter discussed different theories concerning methods for effective research within the UUA and ways for the Commission and/or other bodies to potentially fit within these models. The Commission also discussed with Peter ways of maximizing the value and effectiveness of the Commission’s ongoing work.

Covenant:

At the January CoA meeting, Commissioners generated ideas for what they would like included in a CoA Covenant. Barbara Child took these ideas and combined them into a

single draft document. The Commission reviewed this document and made changes to improve its clarity and content. Following this, the Commission approved the amended version, which will now be inserted into the CoA handbook.

Topic Selection:

The Commission conducted a video conference call with Megan Dowdell over Skype. Don Mohr gave a summary of the morning's discussion with Peter Morales. Erica Baron gave a summary of the morning's work on the CoA Covenant.

Criteria for study:

- 1) New knowledge for which there is a pressing need
- 2) Clear position re: needed change
- 3) Narrow focus, not diffuse
- 4) One coherent whole
- 5) Clearly defined audience
- 6) Provokes thought, not merely descriptive
- 7) Does not duplicate other studies
- 8) Will continue the Commission's tradition of providing valuable resources that lend themselves to wide use
- 9) Will demonstrate that the CoA is a vital body that is needed by the association

The Commission reviewed input gained from the various individuals it had interviewed over the past several months with regard to the Commission's study topic. Commissioners highlighted key themes and areas that would be promising for investigation while not overlapping with other ongoing studies within the. The Commission also discussed the need to avoid looking at the topic of ministry as a "pie" from which we could potentially cut a slice different from those being studied by other groups. Instead, the Commission agreed that its future study would need to focus on a unique perspective on ministry, one that could relate to other "slices" but which would be of a different quality all-together. UUA.

Article II Followup:

-Barbara Child conducted a workshop with 30 people at the Heartland District Meeting.

The focus of the meeting was asking people about what they were doing in their congregations in relation to the CoA's proposed inclusion bylaw. This included prompting them to write in to Tom Loughery, which they hadn't thought of. Likewise, the board at UU church of Indianapolis held a townhall meeting about whether they should include the CoA's inclusion statement in their bylaws.

-Apparently every congregation in Metro New York has adopted the inclusion statement for their bylaws.

-Pete Fontneau preached at two congregations about this type of change. One of them has acted, the other hasn't so far.

- Don Mohr sent an email to his congregation about having this added to their congregation's bylaws
- Jacqui Williams believes that her district executive will present on the proposed inclusion statement in a presentation at the district assembly.

Article II Archival report by Jacqui Williams:

- Jacqui met with Kay Montgomery and John Hurley at the UUA. They are supportive and want as much of our material submitted as possible.
- John unequivocally said that anything sent, should be considered public property and does not need separate permission. Janet Hayes also agreed with this, as did Kay.
- The Commission will go ahead and notify people that their material is going in the archive. Kay will work on getting us a template from the Harvard archives to let people know that their material is being submitted.
- Don Mohr will send to Jacqui Williams his list of materials he suggested submitting to the archive from Article II.
- Jacqui will work with her CoA team to get those letters sent out to the submitters of the materials as well as getting those materials to Fran at Harvard.

Board Action re: Article II:

- Barbara Child will talk to Tom Loughery about sending out another reminder to the congregations to submit to him info about their work regarding the Commission's proposed inclusion statement. She'll communicate with him around the 3rd of May.

Budget report by Don Mohr:

- Nancy Lawrence sent spreadsheets on CoA's budget to Don Mohr. These were from Rachel, another UUA staff member.
- It appears that, before the Board meeting, the CoA has spent \$14,300. There's about \$1,100 of that which Don couldn't figure out. These come from two American Express purchases.
- Don has looked back two fiscal years to try to calculate average meeting cost. When the CoA meets at P&E or one of the retreat centers, it costs about \$7,000 / meeting. Retreat centers are a bit less, P&E is a bit more. Big difference is cost of food.
- GA has cost around \$15,000 on each GA for the past couple years.
- Don believes that if the CoA is going to have any presence at GA, we would need to cut back to two other meetings per year.
- At P&E, it only would cost an extra \$140 for each of us to have our own room instead of sharing rooms.
- Great International Travel charges \$35/person/flight for their booking services. We've been spending around \$800/year total on this.
- The times we've stayed in hotels have been at least an extra \$1,000/meeting.

Plans for Future CoA Meetings:

The Commission decided to hold just two in-person meetings plus a meeting at General Assembly for the 2010-2011 fiscal year. Barbara Child and Jacqui Williams will work to maximize the economic efficiency of the meetings they are coordinating in Indiana and New York, respectively.

Pete Fontneau and Jacqui Williams will serve on an electronic taskforce to come up with ways for the Commission to continue its work between in-person meetings.

Finances for GA 2010:

-Millenium: 1 bedroom suite is what is reserved now (\$262/night~\$100 more than guest rooms. Commission will keep this (at cost of \$500 beyond regular room) because of the importance of meeting with people during GA.

-Commission members will share hotel rooms at GA and will make necessary room arrangements.

-Don Mohr will do an updated financial analysis of where the CoA is right now and our projected GA expenses so as to ensure we live within our limits for GA.

When and Where to have Face to Face Meetings Next Year:

-First choice for fall meeting is September 30th to October 3rd, the second choice if that doesn't work with the church is November 18-21. This meeting will be in the Heartland District, with hearings at the Bloomington (IN) Church and meetings at Barbara's Cabin.

-Spring Meeting: March 3-6. (Albany, NY).

Moving forward with the topic and the study:

-Each person in the Commission will look at the list of questions that Commissioners generated regarding the new topic. Commissioners will condense the questions, reorganize them into what looks like a coherent passage, and then reflect on it. What do you think are the highlights? Where do you think this can be useful? **Deadline: June 4th.**

Hearing Planning:

(Megan Dowdell was not connected via video conference during this section)

The Commission made plans for its hearings in Providence, Rhode Island and Boston, Massachusetts. Commissioners reviewed the agenda used for the Berkeley CA hearing in January and modified the questions to fit the current stage of the study. Participants will be asked the following questions:

- 1) Tell of a time when someone ministered to you. How did you know it was ministry?
- 2) Who makes decisions about worship in your congregation and where does their authority come from?

Boston: Erica, Pete, Jacqui, Barbara
Providence: Michael, Bev, Don, Nana,

Saturday, April 24, 2010

The afternoon began with a worship led by Nana Kratchovil

Megan Dowdell rejoined the Commission via video conference.

Future of Hearings:

- The Commission discussed questions of form and format for future hearings. Commissioners decided that in the future, a focus-group model might be more effective. Along with this, the Commission will work more on specifically inviting particular people, maybe having a room for a ministers' focus group, a room for laity, etc.
- The Commission will also let UUA board members know that we'll be coming to their areas when we're going to have a meeting or hearing there.
- The Commission will also explore possibilities of individual Commissioners or small groups of Commissioners conducting focus groups between regular Commission meetings, perhaps in collaboration with District Executives, ministers, or UUA Board of Trustees members from the areas where such focus groups would take place.

General Assembly:

- Barbara Child will work on creating a draft for the Commission's written and oral reports to GA, which she will send to Commissioners for their input.
- The Commission will use its workshop slot at GA to hold a hearing of the same general form and content as was used for the hearings in Providence and Boston.
- The CoA will also host a discussion group at GA: 1:00 PM on June 26th (Saturday). Attendees are likely to be non-delegates, as it will happen during plenary.
- Commissioners discussed various strategies for publicizing these events and bringing participants to them.
- The Commission will also have a suite at GA which can be used for meetings with particular individuals and small groups. Commissioners discussed possible people to invite to these meetings to assist with the study and appointed Erica, Nana and Michael to work between now and General Assembly to finalize a list of people to invite, and draft questions and discussion topics to raise with them. Don Mohr will also help with the scheduling of these meetings.

Project Manager for New Study

Barbara announced that Erica Baron had been selected as the project manager for the Commission's new study. Erica will plan and coordinate the Commission's work on its study at GA this year.

Title of Report:

The commission decided on a title for its new report. It will be: "Who's in Charge Here? The Complex Relationship Between Ministry and Authority".

Election Process for CoA Officers:

The CoA will add to the handbook the following clarification of the election process: "The outgoing Commissioners will serve as a nominating committee for the election of Commission officers. These outgoing Commissioners will solicit input from all other Commissioners at least a month before the election. This input may include nominations of others, self-nominations, and other desires concerning the officers to be nominated."

Reference to Roberts Rules of Order will be removed from the election procedure in the handbook.

Sunday:

Present: Erica Baron, Barbara Child, Pete Fontneau, Bev Harrison, Nana Kratochvil, Don Mohr, Michael Ohlrogge, Jacqui Williams

Updating the UU Community about the Commission's Progress:

-Barbara Child will write briefly to Peter Morales and the Board letting them know about the new title and clarified focus for the CoA's study. She will also send this to the people we interviewed.

Project Manager's Plan:

- Erica Baron presented to the Commission on her plans for the next phases of the Commission's work:
- Next phase is focus group work.
- Would like to have a small group of people between now and GA decide who to interview at GA and what to ask them.
- At GA, we'll want to spend time prepping Commissioners for leading focus groups and reviewing content of reflection papers.
- Nana Kratochvil, Michael Ohlrogge and Erica Baron will work on planning interviews for GA.

The meeting ended with a review of the tasklist, a checkout, and a closing led by Barbara Child.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Ohlrogge, Secretary
Commission on Appraisal