

CSW Minutes 2020 wrap-up

The Commission on Social Witness, along with so many others, worked diligently to respond to the emerging needs of the pandemic while also growing and adapting the work of the Commission. Since 2018, the Commission has been exploring its vision and mission in conversation with the association. In 2020, the Commissioners focused on listening to varied needs from across the association, including listening to individual UUs prior to and at GA, sending a survey for UUs, and holding meetings with UUA leadership and UU groups. We look forward to sharing what we have learned and ways we imagine that helping to grow and transform the way we promote collective social witness in the future at our spring Social Witness Conveigning (via Zoom, time to be scheduled as of the time of this writing) and at the 2021 GA. To provide a background on the internal work of the Commission during 2020, the quarterly meeting wrap-up below provides a summary. The Commission will post individual meeting minutes for 2021.

In the first quarter of 2020, the Commission focused on identifying roles and responsibilities, articulating a revised mission, and planning for GA. Specific topics and decisions for first quarter meetings included:

- Vision and Mission
 - Completed workshop series and crafted vision and mission for growth stage
- Commission structure
 - Reflected on 2019 trial structure without a chair and decided to identify a chair to promote Commission functioning
- Communication and documentation
 - Identified a commissioner to review and update the website, manage CSW list serve
 - Learned new UUA staffing and communication for website updates including posting revised mission and vision
- Identifying priorities for studying impact of current collective social witness processes and identifying growth opportunities.
 - Identified need to listen to people engaged with current processes, potential to invite to a webinar and meet at GA
 - Identified need to meet with UUA leadership at multiple levels as well as UU groups doing justice and witness work
 - Decided to hold webinar
- Webinar on social witness
 - Scheduled, planned, and advertised webinar
- Meetings with UU groups and leadership
 - Began scheduling meetings
- General assembly session planning and proposals
 - Assigned commissioners to complete proposals and prepare conference arrangements.
 - Identified and submitted requests for volunteer and staff support needs at GA

- Planned volunteer orientation.

Moving into the second quarter of 2020, the Commission focused on planning the pre-GA meeting and planning for GA sessions including planning for the first-even fully-remote GA. Specific topics and decisions for second quarter meetings included:

- General Assembly session revisions
 - Commissioners planned and implemented adaptations to the pandemic and online GA format, including revised sessions, presentations, booth, etc.
 - Identified and planned rebranding to focus on “Witness This!” concept
- Social Witness Webinar
 - Implemented and discussed learning from social witness webinar.
- General Assembly
 - Commissioners coordinated with co-moderators and staff on adapting the AIW process amidst new constraints arising from the pandemic.
 - Discussed and implemented all aspects of CSW work at GA.

Following General Assembly in the third quarter of 2020, the Commission focused on reviewing learning from the meetings at GA and the post-GA survey as well as reachout out to UU leaders for further learning. Specific topics and decisions for third quarter meetings included:

- Learnings from General Assembly sessions
- Review of survey results, integrated with GA session report-out notes and sessions
 - Key needs expressed were around connections in relevant work for sharing learning, strategies, ideas (to know what others are doing and be able to reach out for mutual aid). Connections with multiple individuals and groups doing local organizing around a given topic was of particular need, given the nuances of each community.
- Share report of ongoing conversations with UUs, UU groups, and UUA leadership/staff involved in collective social witness processes
- Identify possible new opportunities for facilitating collective social witness to meet identified needs.
- Revised draft Statement of Conscience
- Discuss and decide on process and timing for SOC draft--commissioners report back on independent work (see below)
 - All agreed to explore new vision involving a concise statement of conscience and a relational process of empowering collaboration and witness action among congregations.
- Discuss process for CSAI
 - Continuing current process at this time, with identified possible growth to explore with others via 2020/2021 meetings and GA
- Regional UUA reps and regional meetings
 - Planned outreach to regional leads to explore ways to build connections, identify needs around ways we can facilitate collective social witness

In the final quarter of 2020, the Commission continued in-depth relational meetings and interviews, met with regional leads, completed the draft Statement of Conscience, and planned for a late winter/early spring conveying on social witness across the association. Specific topics and decisions for fourth quarter meetings included:

- Reflect on learning from regional leaders meeting
- Share report of ongoing conversations with UUs, UU groups, and UUA leadership/staff involved in collective social witness processes
- Identify possible new opportunities for facilitating collective social witness to meet identified needs.
- Complete revised draft Statement of Conscience
- Completed survey development and messaging for congregational poll
- Review proposed Congregational Study Action Issues
 - One submission was received and was recommended to a faster collective witness process (Action of Immediate Witness) and also recommended as pilot featured example of draft statement of conscience
- Discussion of strategy/witness focus areas (all)
 - Through multiple conversations with UUA leadership, opportunity to bear active witness was identified and Commissioners identified focus areas in which they could be most responsive to emerging needs.
- Social Witness Conveying webinar
 - Commission continues planning webinar, with timing pending feedback from UUA staff and regional leads. Commissioners acknowledge that election uncertainty amidst pandemic strain requires that we hold off on scheduling this important (Zoom) event. Year closes with plans for March, pending what unfolds in January.
 - Communications planning for event
- Main events/programs for GA