

Report to the Board on the September 2008 General Assembly and Mission of the Association Partnership (GAMAP) and General Assembly Planning Committee (GAPC) Meetings

GAMAP met September 15, 2009. The Rev. Peter Morales, UUA President, convened the meeting. Participants were Gini Courter, UUA Moderator; Beth McGregor, Tim Murphy; and Linda Shannon, GA Planning Committee; Jan Sneegas, Director, General Assembly and Conference Services (GACS); and Rev. Rosemary Bray-McNatt, Chuck Wooldridge, and Eva Marx, Board of Trustees.

Beth reviewed GAMAP's history. Eva reported on GA 2009 evaluation findings, which she thought reflected the Board of Trustees' core values of wonder, connection, and transformation. GA attendees particularly appreciated the high-quality worship, the theology track of UU University, and other opportunities for spiritual renewal; connecting with old and new UU friends; participating in the life of the Association; new learnings; and addressing justice issues.

The GAMAP discussion focused on three areas—growth, governance, and programming—and issues specific to GA 2010 and GA 2011.

Growth. UUA growth strategies in recent years have aimed to attract more people through marketing and to establish new congregations. The new administration will focus on helping congregations more effectively engage visitors and members, i.e., retain guests and reduce attrition. Congregations that have experienced growth have not done so by creating a growth plan but by being passionate about the possibilities and seeking excellence in congregational life. Congregations can learn much from one another and the Association needs to help them tap that resource. GA needs to imbue attendees with a sense of the possible and the confidence that they can achieve it. The administration will aim for people to leave GA feeling that they have been involved in setting the direction of our Association, learned something new, made connections with people similar to and different from themselves, heard inspiring speakers, and participated in meaningful worship, social gatherings, and public witness. The hope is that attendees will tell others about their experience and want to return.

Governance. UUA bylaws state that the purpose of GA is governance by our member congregations. GA has evolved to fulfill a number of functions, creating competing interests and disagreement about the relative importance of those functions. Governance that sets the direction for our Association need not be limited to procedural actions. Programming aligned with UUA mission and Ends also has a governance function. Balancing procedural and substantive interests is the challenge. Congregations are not currently engaged in the governance process. The challenge is finding ways to engage them. We need to clarify “What is the business of the Association?”

Programming. In the past Independent Affiliates, staff, professional organizations, and others have been entitled to a designated number of GA program slots without criteria,

control, or accountability for content and quality. GAMAP proposed to the GAPC that, in order to ensure the alignment of GA programming with the mission and Ends of our Association, the GAPC, the Board, and staff share responsibility for GA 2010 programming with clear accountability and provision for evaluation.

GA 2010. Winona LaDuke will be the Ware Lecturer. Peter Morales will lead Sunday morning worship. A worship leader for the Service of the Living Tradition has not yet been identified.

GA 2011. Bill Sinkford appointed John Buehrens to chair the committee charged with planning our Association's 50th anniversary celebration in Charlotte. Peter Morales plans to invite either Bill Moyers or Karen Armstrong to be the Ware Lecturer.

The GAPC met September 16-20 in Providence, Rhode Island, which is being considered as a site for GA 2014. Guests included:

Gini Courter, UUA Moderator
Harlan Limpert, Vice President of Ministries and Congregational Support
Erik Kesting, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
Jeremie Giacoia, Leadership Development Associate

The meeting began with a retreat facilitated by Alan Niebanck. GAPC members learned about their behavioral and working styles and how they might work together more effectively. Committee members then reviewed and selected task group assignments.

Site visit. GACS staff and a GAPC representative ordinarily conduct GA site visits. Because of Providence's proximity to Boston and an invitation from the city's Convention and Visitors Bureau to host the GAPC and house members at various local hotels at no cost, the GAPC decided to meet in Providence and participate in a site visit as a full committee. This included spending Friday morning touring the convention center, local hotels, and the city of Providence. The GAPC voted to recommend to the Board of Trustees the approval of the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence as the 2014 GA site. (See attached Providence report.)

This recommendation was accompanied by a sense of urgency and concern about the impact and timing of Fifth Principle Task Force recommendations, which are expected to include biennial GAs. If, at its January 2010 meeting, the Board of Trustees agrees to bring the issue of biennial GA to the 2010 GA and delegates approve it, it is unclear whether there will be a GA in 2014. If the Board decides to postpone bringing the issue to GA, the vote will be delayed at least a year. Providence needs a contractual commitment no later than June 2010; however, since there is at present no commitment, the city could contract with another party before that time if an attractive offer emerges. To avoid this, the GAPC and the GACS would like to initiate a formal agreement as soon as possible.

Grid. GA 2010 scheduling differs from previous years. Programming is concentrated in the first two days with the last two days concentrating on governance. Not using breakout space for two days can result in savings of \$20,000. District Ingatherings are scheduled after dinner and before the Opening Celebration and Plenary on Wednesday. Public Witness is scheduled for Saturday and coincides with the Minneapolis Pride Festival.

(See attached draft grid.

Youth and Young Adult Programming. Erik Kesting and Jeremie Giacoia met with the GAPC to discuss youth and young adult programming needs. Youth and young adult worship differs in style from traditional GA worship and offers youth and young adults the opportunity to be in community with their peers. Consequently, in addition to the intergenerational Synergy worship scheduled for Friday evening, youth and young adults will share two separate worships that will not appear on the grid. A Saturday night worship co-led by youth and young adults will be open to all and will appear on the grid.

Erik would like to see more youth and young adult programming including opportunities for youth and young adult leadership development. GA can model youth and young adult programming for congregations. The issue is not one of being welcoming but of relevance. Inviting youth and young adults to co-facilitate programming is not the answer.

Programming. Harlan Limpert met with the GAPC to discuss a proposal from him and Teresa Cooley that calls for mission-focused, quality programming with provision for accountability. In keeping with the GAMAP discussion, the proposal aims to develop GA programming focused on UUA mission, relevant to congregational life and practice, and organized in themed tracks with workshops that build upon one another or are grouped by areas of interest. To encourage innovative and engaging content, program development would be interdisciplinary, crossing existing disciplinary, departmental, programmatic, and organizational lines instead of being delegated to departmental and organizational silos as has been the custom. A Program Development Committee will work with the GAPC to define mission-related goals, solicit ideas, and make decisions about program content. The GAPC process of selecting additional GAPC-sponsored programs would not change; the two processes would inform and complement one another. Harlan will be responsible for coordinating the process. He will report back to the GAPC in January.

The GAPC voted to delegate 110 GA 2010 program slots to the UUA Administration and appointed Beth McGregor and Barb Atlas to represent the GAPC on the Program Development Committee, which will be interdisciplinary and include staff members from across departments.

The GAPC also voted to delegate to the Board of Trustees responsibility for up to 30 GA 2010 program slots. These include Board and Moderator's programs, business mini-assemblies and hearings, and programs offered by Board-appointed committees and all elected committees except the GAPC. To ensure coordination, the Board is asked to inform the GAPC and the Program Development Committee about how it plans to use these program slots.

New deadlines. GACS plans to post the GA 2010 program online in searchable format on February 26, 2010. This means that the first deadline for event request forms will be November 30, 2009, and the final deadline will be January 15, 2010. The edit mailing will be sent to contacts on February 1 and responses will be due February 15.

Meeting with the Moderator. Gini talked about the difficulty of engaging congregations in governance and the democratic process, pointing out that the last time an item was put

on the GA agenda by congregations or districts was in Long Beach in 2004. She also talked about the changing role of the GAPC, as demonstrated by this year's new approach to GA programming. The Board's role, as elected leaders under policy governance, is to develop ends, set limits, and monitor. The GAPC currently functions partly as policymakers and partly as implementers. In the future the implementation role of the GAPC will become a staff responsibility and GAPC members will be appointed by the President as unpaid staff. Many policy governance-related changes such as these will require bylaw changes voted by delegates at GA. No timeline has yet been developed for bringing proposed changes to GA.

Finance. The GAPC approved a single-tiered fee structure with a minimum of \$850 for exhibit hall booth space with no differentiation between UU and non-UU exhibitors and vendors. The committee also voted to increase 2010 GA full-time registration by \$10 to \$310 and adjust other registration fees accordingly. These votes together with a GA 2010 budget approved by the GAPC will be submitted to the Finance Committee.

Service Project. David Lauth, the 2010 GA District Coordinator, shared a service project proposal from Hope Community, Inc., an inner-city neighborhood located a few blocks from the Minneapolis Convention Center. The proposal includes the customary Sunday morning collection but also describes a chance for GA attendees to participate in hands-on service by working side-by-side with community residents to assist with needed repairs. The local committee is continuing to explore the feasibility of this undertaking.

Copyrights and permissions. Copyrights and permissions continue to be a major concern. The need for permissions extends beyond music and includes the use of all materials used by programs, e.g., permissions for readings that are used in videotaped and recorded sessions that are subsequently distributed, or programs and presenters that are streamed online.

Collection in plenary at GA 2010. In recent years the Board has voted to have a special collection during plenary to support our justice work. The GAPC would like to know whether the Board intends to repeat this practice at GA 2010.

The next GAPC meeting is scheduled for January 7–10, 2010 in Charlotte, the 2011 GA site.

Submitted by Eva Marx, Board of Trustees Liaison to the GAPC
September 23, 2009