

Widening the Circle of Concern

Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change

Q &A Session

July 18, 2021

What happened at the last WCC meeting?

- ▶ We reviewed & prioritized the USG Governance goals that had been brainstormed in the previous meetings
- ▶ We reviewed the recommendations from the WCC chapter on Congregations & Communities that focused on increasing equity, inclusion, & diversity
- ▶ We discussed the possibility of implementing congregational reviews of equity, inclusion, & diversity in USG activities

Prioritization of Governance Goals for USG Leadership

Tally **Proposed USG Goal: Increase equity, diversity and inclusion in USG leadership.**

12	Develop mentoring process for people interested in leadership, particularly those with diverse identities.
11	Offer standardized training/orientation for new leaders including Multicultural sensitivity/Anti-racism training for leaders
9	Expand the Nominating Committee.
8	Offer UU201 session(s): content - covenant, governance (frequency to be determined)
6	Make the path to increased volunteerism clearer to encourage increasing activity/volunteerism. (eg A session on how to get involved more deeply, Committee Fair)

- 5 Make focused efforts to mentor young adults for leadership roles
- 5 Charge all committees with reaching out to and involving new people every year. (Track progress in Annual Report)
- 4 Create fund to pay for leadership training for people who request it
- 4 Clarify and promote how the church can support a person who has a ministry that they want to offer (have a structure where people are a support committee to people with new ideas, eg Standing in Solidarity for Racial Justice Vigils)
- 3 Support leadership development for interested youth
- Increase connections between USG and regional UU activity (eg Central East Region (CER),
- 2 UUA, Greater Philly UU cluster)

Prioritization of Governance Goals for USG Attendees to UUA General Assembly

Proposed USG Goal: Increase access, equity, diversity and inclusion for USG GA attendees and delegates

1	11	Make funding available for people who want to go to GA (whether they are delegates or not) who would be unable to attend without financial support.
2	7	During a service or in communications throughout the year explain GA to increase participation.
3	6	Consider asking the nominating committee to nominate delegates to GA including youth, young adults, and those from BIPOC and LGBTQ communities and those with financial support needs.
4	4	Have an active denominational affairs committee/point person that talks year round about our connection to the denomination.

Congregations & Communities: Opening Statement

“Many of our congregations are in trouble with dwindling membership, participation, and financial contributions. A factor that contributes to this decline is our inability to address issues of inclusion, equity, and diversity. We start this section with two assertions: first, that real-time face-to-face congregations matter, even with all the challenges to maintain them and in a time when “church-going” is less valued by many in younger generations... And, second, we will also need to support alternative and often virtual communities in order to ensure the survival of communal associations, especially for younger Unitarian Universalists of color and those living in areas where less mainstream identities are less common.” from WCC Report, pp.39-40

Key Points from the Chapter on Congregations & Communities

- ▶ The culture of many congregations is not keeping pace with the expectations of new generations for anti-oppression practices
 - ▶ We are bound in covenant to a set of beliefs & aspirations, yet we do not convey these common communal values to others
 - ▶ Congregational polity calls for us to heed all voices including new & minority members as sources of wisdom, direction, & faithfulness

Key Points, cont.

- ▶ Congregations need promising practices including resources on caucusing to support oppressed & marginalized groups
 - ▶ White members need to do their own work, building humility, learning about & becoming accountable for the impact of racism on their community, developing their own ideas for how to address racism at the interpersonal & institutional levels (pp. 49-50)
- ▶ We need to build a congregational model that can serve future generations with new practices around diversity, equity & inclusion
 - ▶ Congregations need to be more focused on promoting & providing opportunities to live our values

Recommended Congregational Practices to Increase Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion

- ▶ Appoint someone to be a liaison to the UUA, possibly a denominational affairs committee or a point person to monitor & ensure representation
 - ▶ Not well organized at USG; needs revitalization to make sure we know what is offered and to help increase connection
- ▶ Ensure that lifespan religious educators are focused on building understanding about equity & inclusion, providing opportunities for cross-cultural immersion as well as videos, films, & online resources
 - ▶ Hampered by Covid; hopefully will start up again

Recommended Congregational Practices, cont.

- ▶ Do basic hospitality role-play & education each year for everyone with a special emphasis on those involved with membership & greeting activities
 - ▶ This needs to be done thoughtfully to overcome blind spots & emphasize what works well
 - ▶ We need to revisit & relearn ways to welcome and engage people
- ▶ Include money in the budget annually for education around anti-oppression practices
 - ▶ This is in the budget for the current year

Recommended Congregational Practices, cont.

- ▶ Include money in the budget annually for scholarships to UUA General Assembly & make them available to those who most need to connect around identity- Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, LGBTQ folx, young adults, & youth
 - ▶ We have set up funding for GA scholarships
- ▶ Form justice partnerships with organizations led by those most affected by the issues & follow their lead
 - ▶ We have a supporting relationship with POWER

Questions for You to Consider

- ▶ What does the idea of “church community” mean to you & how can we use it to welcome new people & provide them with a sense of community?
- ▶ As we move ahead with multiple platforms for participation at USG (in person & unmasked or masked & distanced, virtual), how can we work together to build our sense of community & widen the circle?
- ▶ How do you feel about the idea of caucusing to address racism at the interpersonal & institutional levels?