

## **Hospitality and Inclusion, Session 1, August 4, 2021**

### **Notes**

Thirteen participants: Margaret Thompson, Andrea Barsevick, Lois Murphy, Lisa Dutton, Treva Burger, Deb Silver, Nancy Anderson, Eric Foster, Shobhi Kanal, Rev. Kent, Ryan Hurd, Andrea Parry, Dev Howerton

**Check In** - How are you thinking about Widening the Circle since we last met?

- Seems to be an operational plan for going forward.
- Reflections from ASD committee: seems like this work reflects our spirituality and how to engage in spiritual practice.
- The theme we're on now on hospitality and welcoming is critical; need to listen to people, esp. marginalized people. Being hospitable is a spiritual practice, but it takes a lot of practice.
- Feeling gratified that the work of this group has spilled over into other groups; it is impacting the way we are planning to reopen the building and plan for worship.
- This work has impacted the work of the Board, e.g. planning for anti-racism training for leadership, forming a white people's caucus, and reevaluating our covenant of right relations.
- Have gone to the racial justice vigil about once/week and wondering if the Black people who honk and raise their fist would be interested in coming to the church. Unclear how the vigil fits into the work of the church as a whole.
- Interesting that a document we thought was clunky is providing guidance; glad we didn't throw out the baby with the bath water.
- Helpful to remind people later of the problem. Aware of scenarios at USG and person felt bad didn't intervene at the time. Need education.

### **Discussion**

#### **Hospitality - Microaggressions**

Did your understanding of microaggressions change during or after reading this chapter? Did reading this affect how you think about greeting and interacting with people who are new to USG and/or people you are not familiar with? What do you understand about microaggressions? How do you think we can constructively engage those committing them? Support those affected by them? Prevent them from happening?

- Thinking about microaggressions in welcoming when read the quote "Oh, you must be new to UU"
- Aware of how own experience is reflected on others, e.g. Is this your first GA?
- It's not just an issue is with new people, microaggressions can happen with anyone at any time.
- Found it useful to have more vocabulary describing them, e.g. impact vs. intention.
- Noticed that the examples including people in groups and that others in the group were able to point out how what was said made them feel uncomfortable or confused.

- RE: diversity in worship and music – don't assume Black people don't like Mozart.
- Better to ask open-ended questions rather than making assumptions.
- "Calling In" vs. "Calling Out."
  - From the chat: Link to NYT article about Loretta Ross and calling in vs. calling out....<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/19/style/loretta-ross-smith-college-cancel-culture.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>
- Could ask people when they take them aside to address a microaggression if they understand or could do it differently.
- Could start meetings noting that imperfect and to speak up if they cause harm.
- People's experience of microaggressions is varied, so it's important not to assume people experienced themselves as a target. Could ask how what was said makes people feel.

### Avatar

What came up for you as you read the avatar? Did you recognize any of the issues/experiences it raised?

- Floors me to read what came from ministers and leaders; made me cringe.
- The theology of darkness might be fruitful to explore. Explore the language of darkness and how it conjures up negativity.
- From the chat:
  - A link to the poem, You, Darkness, by Rainer Maria Rilke <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/you-darkness/>
  - And this poem by Langston Hughes <https://poets.org/poem/dream-variations>
- The avatars are composites and don't represent a specific person.
- Also points out the misogyny that goes along with white supremacy culture.

### WtC Recommendation

New structures to provide *leadership education* to UU leaders are needed and should include multicultural hospitality practices as foundational.

**USG Proposed Goal C1** Do basic hospitality role-playing and education each year for membership related functions, worship planning and the congregation.

- Some of these goals require funding, looking out 5 years.
- Sounds like a great recommendation, but may need to restate the issues and purpose for training.
- Might be able to pull in material from trans inclusion course recently purchased.

### Inclusion

#### WtC Recommendation

Convening for volunteer leaders at the regional and cluster level should be emphasized to allow support for marginalized groups, including people of color.

**What are things USG can do to support this recommendation?** For example, make sure we promote the various groups that the UUA and Central East Region are offering.

- Support Latifah going to the Finding My Way Home conference for religious professionals who are people of color.
- Also need support for volunteers.

An invitation to **Conversations for Liberation** in your communities, we invite you to honor these three core commitments, grounded in Unitarian Universalist values:

- We recommit ourselves to the aspiration of a fully inclusive and anti-oppressive community.
- We recenter the truth telling that comes from voices at the margins of our faith community.
- We reaffirm that we must lead from the covenant of care that binds us.

**USG Proposed H(ospitality) Goal:** Ask the people revisiting the covenant to consider this and also consider using it as a frame for the fall leadership retreat and any organizational planning.

- These 3 statements would be good to consider during the evaluation and revision of our covenant.
- Good idea to use as a framework for retreat and planning.

**USG Proposed Goal C3** Develop identity- based caucuses for ongoing conversation and community.

- A white caucus has been proposed and under development.

### **WtC Recommendation**

Providing resources to promote *young adult and youth convenings* that include support and caucusing for those with marginalized leadership is essential.

### **What can USG do to support this recommendation?**

- Some of this requires budgeting. It also means we need to show our youth that these things exist, e.g. THRIVE.
- Relationship building is important. Revitalization is going to be needed to bring youth and families back during/after the pandemic. Young adults are a difficult group for outreach.
- Need to keep our eyes out for opportunities.
- Wonder if USG has ever done any outreach at any of the colleges or universities in the area. This might be difficult to do this year during the pandemic. Might be fruitful to encourage members who are in college to form UU networks.
- From the chat:
  - USG could offer support for every college student from USG to start a college UU group.

- As a young adult I was supported by a congregation in starting a young adult club on my college campus -- with resources and adult advisors who mentored me and co-led with me.

**C2/G3.4** Have an active denominational affairs committee/point person that talks year round about denomination offerings and our connection to the denomination.

**Denominational affairs point people possible roles:** Have people agree to do for a quarter or alternate months of the year. Get on UUA/Regional email lists. Read the emails, digest and share with communications people to create a handout and webpage with all the info easily accessible. Attend events as many of the denominational meetings as they can manage and then report back to the congregation. Or a point person brings back the opportunities and then people would be asked to attend each of the meetings it would be good to have someone at and share the experience and figure out what the sharing looks like.

- Seems like a good idea. Feel disconnected from what is happening at the regional level.
- Might be difficult to recruit people to do this if volunteers are stretched. If could find 3 or 4 people the workload would be lighter.
- Follow the passion. If people are attending UUA or Regional programs, find a way for them to report back.
- Perhaps this is a communication function; communication team is currently on hiatus, but once the team is reconvened, could consider it.
- Could publicize ahead of time what is coming up at GA, promote it so people who are passionate about it would be interested in attending.

**How do people feel about the goals from the discussion in the last session:**

**C4** Ask committees to create justice/equity/diversity/inclusion (JEDI) objectives to reflect on as they develop goals for the year and share their achievements in their annual report responses. (We can share questions from the multicultural audit to help them create their goals.)

**C5** Reinforce the desire to widen the circle by engaging and welcoming "new people", not just your existing network of friends, as the congregation starts in-person and virtual services in August.

**What are ways we can do this?**

- Makes a lot of sense, but how do we get the message out?
- The themes coming up this year might reinforce some of this. Widening the Circle is the theme for Feb. Can look at SGM and worship.
- Encouraging worship associates and ushers, people in leadership roles, to model welcoming and being inclusive.
- C5 is a good goal, but need to identify how going to do it over time.
- Support both goals, but need more information about C4. Is there benchmarking? See questions in last chapter, pgs 52-53.
- Look at the "white audit" done in the past. Some people were offended by this; wasn't done out in the open; handled poorly.
- As we go back to in-person services, we may have new people who've never been to a service at USG. Could ask "Have we met?" vs. "Are you new?"

- Need to speak with members of various committees and tell them what trying to do and get their feedback.

**Check Out** What do you want to make sure we cover at the next meeting? Need more discussion of C4 and C5.

Are we ready for the next chapter? Yes, we'll move onto the next chapter, Living Our Values in the World.

**Closing Words**