

GA Report to UUSF Board:

General Assembly is an annual meeting, and all UU churches in the United States are encouraged to send delegates, the number of delegates determined by their membership. We had six delegates, for example. Ministers and other staff members also attend. This year was held in Pittsburgh, PA. Moves around the country—last year was in Portland, OR.

There were 2,593 delegates from all 50 states. 1,317 delegates were on-site, and 1,276 delegates participated on line, off site. We, for example, had four delegates on site, and two delegates off site, Mari Magaloni Ramos and Merle Easton.

This year a number of changes to the procedure at business meetings were made to equalize the participation of both delegates on-site and off-site delegates attending on line. For example, instead of having pro and con microphones on the floor of the business meetings for the on-site delegates, whereas the off-site delegates were projected onto the screens on stage, on-site delegates were asked to go into a room where their pro or con statements were video-recorded and presented on the screens just as the off-site delegates were.

Then, when the time for discussion was over, all delegates, both on and off site, were asked to vote on line. No votes were taken at the meeting. Several hours were given for this; usually the deadline was 10 pm after an afternoon meeting. The results of the votes were announced at the beginning of the next business meeting the following day.

Next year's General Assembly in June 2024 will be ENTIRELY online—so these were good practice sessions for that GA. Then in 2025 it will be again multiplatform, with the site of the General Assembly in Baltimore, MD.

There were two major business items. The first was a preliminary vote on the new Article II Amendment which is designed to replace our current UUA seven principles, as well as the eighth principle which we voted on this past year.

There were many amendments offered before GA—over 100—and 15 were made priorities by UUA Board, and all were voted on. Seven of these passed and 8 did not. I can send you copies of proposed revision if you would like—important information for board members to be aware of!

The preliminary vote for the Article II Amendment passed. Discussion will continue during this coming year on line, and a final vote will be taken next year at the fully online GA.

The other business item was a request for immediate divestment from all fossil fuel investments in the UU Common Endowment Fund, which contains both UUA funds and funds from many churches, including our own! The item called for immediate complete divestment of all fossil fuel investments, and use of the fund for reparations to people and groups harmed by the fossil fuel industry, including indigenous groups whose land was taken for oil drilling, as one example. Susan Frederick-Gray, outgoing president, described how the UUA Board is already working on this, but it can't be done "immediately" without seriously hurting both the UUA budget and the Common Endowment Fund. This business item was prepared by a group of young adults, and the young adults on site, who all sit together, all cheered when any pro comment was made. Then, when discussion was over, they held up signs saying "Divest Immediately", got up and marched to the front of the business meeting where they yelled and cheered for a few minutes. This business item failed, however, as we found out the next day.

There were three immediate witness resolutions, which are presented in the few months before GA as matters that need immediate attention. On those submitted, votes are taken and the top three are presented at GA. These were:

Rise up to Stop Cop City, which would be the largest militarized police training center, which the Atlanta Georgia Government is currently approving. The cost is 90 million dollars, and it will destroy 381 acres of land in Atlanta's largest remaining green space.

Organizing for Health Equity. With the attacks against abortion rights, gender equity, care for the very young and very old, poverty, systemic racism, and etc. The United Nations will vote on a new International Sustainable Health Program in September, and this resolution calls for action to support this program.

UUA Support for Dreamers, and call on Congress to pass legislation giving them a pathway to permanent residence. It also calls on UUs to support the Dreamers in their local communities.

ALL THREE Resolutions of Immediate Witness (RIWs) passed.

Elections: Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt elected as new UUA President, to replace Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray. (Susan had been a senior minister I think in Arizona, before her election.) Sofia had served as co-president in the spring of 2017 alongside Rev. Bill Sinkford and Dr. Leon Spencer. All the other elections, for Board of Trustees, Commission on Appraisal, Commission on Social Witness and etc, were uncontested, except for the Nominating Committee which had 5 nominees for four positions.

There are also a number of workshops—one, for example, was given by Rev. Laura Shennum and Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt, President of Starr King School for the Ministry, across the bay from us, along with Jayanti Chapot's assistance on the WEAV program Rev. McNatt is developing, and which Rev. Shennum did a trial presentation of at our church this past year.

The Exhibit Hall is always an exciting and interesting place to visit—to see the booths of all the UU Organizations, including the Divinity Schools, the UUSC, UU Women's Federation, and etc. Both Bob Bacon and Joe Chapot and Laura Ludwig were in booths there-to chat with and feel our presence there! Lots of books at the UUA Bookstore, gifts, and etc etc etc.

There are several important annual services as well, the Service of the living Tradition, Bridging Ceremony, and a Sunday Service. The Living Tradition service celebrates ministers, those entering the ministry, those receiving final fellowship, those retiring and those passed. Sadly, two of those who passed were former Bay Area residents, Rev. David Keyes and Ref. Rob Eller Isaacs, co-minister with his wife Jan of the Oakland UU Church for many years.

In summary, GAs are such important, rich, informative, interconnecting, friendship creating, forward-moving conferences. My lip corners are sore from smiling so much for the last week! You meet so many new people from all over the country, share ideas and experiences, and the sheer feeling of being there when items are being discussed, so you can "feel" how others are reacting to differences of opinion, etc., and "feel" the interdependence of us all in this wider movement, is so important to our existence and our future as an association of UU Churches in the United States.