

## Rabbi Report to UUCGT Board May, 2017

### Highlights

- Regional Assembly and connecting with colleagues
- Leadership seminar via CTU

### **Denominational Activity**

#### Regional Assembly

The Regional Assembly in Oak Brook, IL, was a productive and useful gathering. I was pleased to have meaningful time with regional colleagues and our MidAmerica staff, including Dori Thexton (who is retiring as of the end of June), Nancy Combs Morgan, Revs. Lisa Presley, Sharon Dittmar and Colleen Squires, who have worked with UUCGT as Congregational Life Consultants collectively over decades.

The Heartland Chapter Clergy meetings were particularly informative and personally helpful. I am blessed with extremely supportive colleagues. I observed some worship ideas that are very exciting. Our primary business was deep check in and approval of a letter from the three clergy chapters that make up the MidAmerica Region to the UUMA Board and its Executive Director Don Southworth. The letter expressed our concern about Rev. Southworth's letter (regarding the situation currently consuming our national leadership to the UUMA Board) and ensuing communications.

I was very honored to be invited to sing at the opening worship of Regional Assembly (post-ministry days). The anthem "I Need You to Survive" has become unofficial anthem of the Black Lives of UU. I am hopeful that music director John Bailey can weave this into liturgy in the near future.

I would be remiss not to communicate to you the level of crisis the UUA is in at this time. It would be a great contribution to supporting our national organization's discernment and healing process if we could set a goal of returning to be a Fair Share Congregation (had been called "honor congregation"). I will offer suggestions for how we might move in this direction in my annual report.

#### Race and UUCGT, UUMA and UUA

I want to express my deepest thanks and respect for Margaret Wozniak, the Sunday Service Committee, including co-chairs Hal Gurian and Amanda Mangiardi, for its leadership and ministry in taking up the call from Black Lives UU to dedicate a Sunday service to white supremacy. We were one of 500 congregations to participate. The road ahead is long and will be challenging as we truly dig into the difficult topics and feelings we must face if we are live up to the call of our principle to live justly and work for justice.

There are two additional principles being consider for addition to our Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism: an eighth regarding the denomination's commitment to racial and economic justice, and a ninth regarding reconciliation and lifting up the ideal of forgiveness.

I will be meeting with our UUA GA delegates to discuss my impressions of the candidates for UUA President, and to review the business agenda to ensure they are prepared to carry the message of UUCGT to the annual gathering in New Orleans.

### **Safe Congregation Response Team**

Great thanks to Anne Marie Love and Nick Erber, co-chairs, Joe Cook, D.O., and staff member Sarah Montgomery-Richards. I thank the team, and I am honored to sit with them as fellow discerner and guide. I thank the Safe Congregation Response Team for its covenantal commitment in the process of reviewing the candidates for elected positions, which was out most recent work.

It is important to clarify for the congregation that the SCRT does not exist only for the physical safety of children, one of its purviews, but for the safety, on several levels, of the community as a whole. This team is entrusted with being part of one of the few but vital “checks and balances” ensuring that we operate legally and ethically at the highest levels of our governance.

### **Life Cycle Leadership**

The next meeting to discuss the Coming of Age program will take place May 16, 2017. Sarah Montgomery-Richards has information for the planning that is be of great value.

I remind the board and members that Mercedes Kimling’s memorial service will take place on July 16.

### **Congregational Care**

Again I express my gratitude to Joanie Jackson and Pat Light who co-chair this team. We are in the midst of not only calling, visiting, writing to members and friends who are in need of a little extra care, but we are also continuing the conversation about the scope of Congregational Care – what are the expectations of the team on the part of our members, what are reasonable boundaries, how do we best live into this ministry?

### **Public Witness**

It was a privilege to part of a multi-faith panel organized and envisioned by Sarah Montgomery-Richards and sponsored by the Area Council on Religious Diversity at the Woodmere Library. I taught a session at NMC’s Campus Day and had 48 participants in a session of “The Tent of Abraham: Islam as Dialogue Partner.” It was my first chance to teach from my growing knowledge base from the doctor of ministry program. It was well received.

I have been invited to speak at Munson’s Hospice breakfast in June.

Our local Clergy and Pie group are grateful to our Dr. Nick Erber who has organized a day long training via “Gospel Against Aids,” a program aimed at helping clergy be better supporters and advocates for people living with AIDS. This will take place on May 22.

Please note that Traverse City's Pride celebration will take place June 21 – 25. This year I would love to have UUCGT members walk together in the parade, and it would be great for us to have a visible new tee shirt that identifies us. (Thanks to Kay Sturgeon who recently mentioned the new tee shirt idea.)

### **Small Group Ministries**

The Shanti Deva Fan Club, a new small group that will study Jinpa's *Fearless Heart*, will have its organizing meeting on May 22. This is a very exciting suggestion from Chris Innes.

Consistent small group gatherings – whether it is the Peacemaker Needleworkers, the social justice reading group, Shanti Deva Fan Club, InterPlay, the New Moon Group, the Men's Group – are a key to building the kinds of relationships and connections that are the heart of a healthy congregation. One of my goals for 2017 – 2018 will be to build more such groups.

### **Requests for the Board:**

Please stay informed about developments at the national level. <http://www.uuworld.org/>

For opening words, I invite you come prepared with one sentence from this article: <https://alban.org/archive/cleaning-up-bad-communication-habits/>

What other potential small groups do you discern for our growth and the deepening of connections among our members?