

**PRAIRIE STAR DISTRICT
ANNUAL CONFERENCE: KANSAS CITY, MO
APRI 23-25, 2004
EVALUATION**

Nineteen surveys were completed.

1. What were your main reasons for attending this conference?

For us it's a unique opportunity to experience community among fellow UUs in contrast to our regular isolated rural environment. (We are CLF members.)
Fun, fellowship, knowledge.
To be around a large group of liberal people.
Friends & fun & visit my hometown...networking.
We attended several GAs and other District meetings, so am interested. Proximity was also a factor.
Gaining new information and strategies for membership growth and retention. Renewing contacts with PSD friends from pervious meetings as well as meeting new people.
To meet other UUs. To learn how to make policy manuals and get our church in the community eye as well as learn about dealing with conflict.
To connect with people and resources in the District. To get a feel for it. To connect my congregation with District directions.
To connect with ministerial colleagues.
To participate in Awards luncheon.
I'm going to be president of our congregation next year and felt some obligation to attend. Plus wanted to participate in the Iowa midsize breakfast meeting.
Networking, business, learning
Meetings, connections, nourishment
This was my first conference. I was curious about priorities and interests of the broader district (as opposed to my own church). I wanted to meet UUs from other areas.
To meet other UUs from our area. To attend the business meeting. To hear the key speakers. (Morales & Robinson-Harris).
To learn better ways of increasing membership. Also, to lean way to make our Fellowship a more intentional community.
To find out the latest thinking in the UUA and Prairie Star District. To make me feel good about UU. To make me feel that all of this effort I put into being a good UU is worthwhile to the rest of the world.
To learn what other congregations are doing to enhance membership, attendance, finances, community service, publicity etc., in hopes of finding ideas that our church could adopt or modify to dig our way out of some of our favorite ruts.
Wanted to hear the two lectures.
Awards presenter.

2. Did the conference meet your needs and expectations?

Yes. Despite not belonging to a UU conventional congregation the workshops we choose have meaning and interest for us.
Yes.
Mostly. I missed having table topics on Saturday morning.
Yes, totally.
Yes. Very well organized. Warm and friendly and efficient.
Yes!! Good crowd, good variety of programs were offered (It was hard to choose.) This was a well-planned and well-executed weekend.
Yes.
I was disappointed by the low turn-out of colleagues. I felt it was a little too jam-packed. The workshops were occasionally not up to what my church's delegates and I were hoping for.
Yes.
Yes/No. Breakfast with ? of the Iowa group was useful and I look forward to the workshop. I got some good information on canvassing. The Judy lecture was awful, and the business meeting worse.
Yes and no.
Yes.
Yes.
Yes, it did. I heard many comments complimenting the All Souls Community on their preparation and on their warmth and hospitality.
Yes.
Yes.

Yes, generally speaking. Good choice of speakers and (apparently) good briefing of speakers re what could be most useful for them to talk about.

Yes.

Met my needs OK. I have had more inspirational keynote and Judy lecture speakers in the past. These were too focused on work and not enough of an inspiring message.

3. What was most helpful or enjoyable to you?

The exposure to a community of people among whom we feel so validated for who we really are.

Discussions.

The workshops on growth.

Church right next to hotel. A wonderful homestay with Claudine Thomas. (Mike Schwab)

Not having to drive to different places for various events or meals is a real plus.

Theme speakers, especially Tracy R.H. asking us to exchange ideas with a neighbor. 3 workshops with knowledgeable presenters and good handouts, lunch and dinner very good food. Dinner MC Jim Mitchell was quite funny. Registration packet was legible, and useful. Registration process very easy.

The Community Visibility seminar had handouts that were well written and will be easy to take home.

Interaction with colleagues was good but also rare. Analysis of the KC media program.

Interacting with other UUs. Like learning about the media campaign in KC.

Breakfast Saturday morning/the Rochester group's talk on canvassing and Kansas City on ? fundraising.

Singing on Sunday, home hospitality, Judy lecture. Lots of little tidbits and ideas to use at home.

Good job with logistics. Wonderful theme--growth is what we are hungry for. Quality workshops. I liked having various worship opportunities.

The perspectives provided in the keynote and Judy lecture were helpful and interesting. I also enjoyed the workshops I attended.

The workshops I attended were valuable. The meditation room and labyrinth room were a welcome respite from the hustle/bustle. The bookshop was marvelous.

The main speakers on Friday evening and Saturday morning, and networking.

The sessions on humanism and the general emphasis on making our church activity attractive to non-members who share our values.

The Rochester presentation on its recent stewardship campaign.

Service Sunday AM at All Souls. Meeting & conversation with new people.

4. What suggestions do you have for next year?

Could better traffic flow be effected on second floor? Traffic flow between those seeking passage, those seeking conversation and those seeking food/drink at buffet service tables was periodically maddening.

Children are the key to increasing membership. Several workshops should be devoted to the training and mentoring of young people to develop UU adults!

It would be helpful to have better descriptions of the workshops and to list which workshops would be for small or large congregations. A lot of the workshops seemed to be for large congregations.

No suggestions...it was great.

If different sites are needed other years (see above question [on not driving to different events]) maybe a chartered bus or even organized car pools would be in order.

Youth worship was difficult to hear. Band at dinner was cheerful, but too loud during early part of meal. If possible, give all exhibitors equal visibility & exposure. The ones by the Seville ballroom got less "foot-traffic" than those outside the Ballroom. Name tags need larger font size!!!

Speakers might make copies of the outlines of their talks to make sharing at the home congregations easier-- (and encourage less ad-libbing when we get home.)

Encourage more ministerial involvement.

Annual meeting was far too long. Reminder to bring banners might be helpful (maybe on a sheet with directions).

I would hope the Judy lecture could be a talk, not an effort at a facilitative event. I was appalled. Think about adopting a consent agenda for most items on the annual meeting agenda. It will speed up the meeting and allow discussion on issues that do arise. (Henry Harrison ?)

Consider fewer, longer workshops. Don't pack the schedule. Allow more downtime. Very poor time management in one particular workshop. We did not reach stated goals. Some people skipped a session to take a nap. Not enough time for recreation.

Keep up the good work!

I'd like to see workshops on spiritual diversity, lay worship planning, spiritual development, etc. In general topics relating to spirituality and worship would be of interest.

The loud music during Saturday dinner made conversation impossible--and people came out of the workshops ready to talk. Delay the music till later. OR make it soft classical music as background. I thought the worship services were too late in the evening. I was too tired to enjoy them as much as I would have liked. Attention should have been called to the exhibits way

down the hall. I think many people missed them. I wonder if we could find a way to get the youth and adults to mix at mealtime? They were all sitting at a table by themselves. And they may not want to talk with adults...Post this evaluation form on the website, so people can submit it electronically. You may have to give them a prize for completing it, so that they will do it. OR send everyone an electronic survey after the conference. Make a paper list of registrants available to everyone on Saturday, so people can get it to use for contact info for people they've met.

I have two. First, every congregation in the District is struggling with website development. Last year's communications workshop was overflowing with folks that had many problems. Instead of saying that every presenter needs to pay a registration fee to be considered, why not find out what we really need and then recruit presenters to fill the need. A presenter on websites that paid no registration but drew five or six additional registered attendees would be well worth it.

None. The people who have the responsibility for planning the annual meeting seem to each year do a very good job.

Allow another half-hour for the Business Meeting. If time not needed, so much the better! Members of local planning committee should drive the route suggested to out-of-towners, to determine that said routes are actually doable for those coming from principal points of the compass--not just one.

Need better vegetarian menu options. There was no vegetarian option at lunch, * and the dinner option could have used a more substantial protein component. They were out of vegetables when I went through the line. The soup was made with a meat broth (I asked.) *Fish/seafood is not vegetarian.

Good hotel here this year, close to sponsoring church. Need better variety on Buffet Lunch (Vegan, Atkins, etc.) Annual Business Meeting too long!

Additional comments

. We witnessed lots of evidence the band's performance at Saturday evening's banquet was well received. However we found it very contra-indicated for this function. Even without the band's performance the multiple tables of ten generate much conversational din. With the band playing we really could only yell at each other to make connection. Having seated ourselves to view the speakers' table we found our backs to this musical ensemble's performance anyway.

This was a good site for the event. The facility was large and food was good.

I wonder if workshops reinvent the wheel. There might be value in somehow recording sessions and making it available to a larger audience. (Create and maintain an archive on the Web?)

The music provided for the Saturday night dinner was counter-productive. People were looking forward to a relaxing time to chat with old friends and make new friends. The music was not soothing, melodic or entertaining. I saw one couple dance for 2 or 3 minutes. That was all. The group was not funny and people tried hard to ignore the discordant blare and concentrate on hearing others at their table until it was their turn to shout a reply. It was more than a waste of money. The music had a negative impact. Soft background music or a CD would have been much more soothing and appreciated.

Meals were excellent. Good food, plenty of it, ambiance conducive to fellowship. In all, an excellent event.