

ANNUAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 10, 2005

Annual Conference Debriefing, St Paul, MN

PRESENT:

Annual Conference Program

Mildred Larson, Sam Wormley, Eric Severson, Suzanne Owens-Pike, Gina Dugan

Unity-Unitarian Local Arrangements 2006

Maura Williams, Barbara Hubbard, Julie Handberg, Sharon Merritt

Iowa City Local Arrangements 2007

Peggy Houston, Charlie (in-coming board president), Nancy Haley, Gay Michaelson

MINUTES TO: Nancy Heege, Phillip Lund, Sarah Greene

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- Speakers;
- Singing;
- Singing Workshop;
- Hymn singing, piano and acoustics;
- Outstanding hotel space;
- Record attendance, over 300!
- Speakers laid the groundwork for the workshops;
- Musical entertainment was powerful and scheduled early so audience was engaged. Excellent!
- Smiles – people looked happy to be there and were enjoying themselves;
- Youth with adults in workshops;
- Youth led worship, youth leading adults;
- MC's from local congregation who exemplify the life of the congregation, who can take charge and know what needs to happen next.

WHAT WORKED WELL

- Heard many positive comments throughout conference;
- Unity Hospitality Team was welcoming and friendly, accessible, well placed throughout the conference, proactive in directing people to events, and answered questions;
- Great teamwork, there were many volunteers, people were matched well with their strengths;
- Good internal communication on local arrangements. Had regular meetings to brainstorm ideas;
- Delegated tasks to team leaders on local arrangements;
- Excel to sort records for ribbons, childcare and congregations. Send registration data to next local arrangements chair, program chair and annual conference archivist;
- No registration line! Very efficient process;
- Good flow to the conference schedule, facility and speakers;
- The conference schedule stays pretty much the same from year to year;
- Laptop computer and printer at conference to print receipts, to find answers fast, for example who the youth advisor were or if a group had checked in yet;
- Publicity was excellent;
- Hotel map was easy to read;
- Bookstore had a nice selection;

- Local arrangements team structure of 4 core people worked well:
 - ♣ Barbara – registration
 - ♣ Julie – hotel
 - ♣ Maura – program, workshops, publicity, logo and conference flow
 - ♣ Sharon – details, returning phone calls;
- Team leaders each had a committee of volunteers and reported to the 4 core people listed above;
- No meal Friday night worked well;
- Business meeting was good, had more time, Mary did an excellent job leading the meeting;
- Close proximity between hotel and church helped reduce cost.

WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT OR SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT TIME

- Ask speakers to provide a conference workshop;
- AV equipment too expensive at hotel (ppt \$450, internet access \$200, flip chart \$30, stand extra). Negotiate into hotel contract if possible;
- Interfacing between the annual conference sub-groups;
- Increase communication between working groups and clarify conference details such as who is presenting awards and making introductions;
- Announcements to turn off cell phones;
- Conference schedule is booked solid, would like more free time;
- Make signage more prominent;
- Accommodate people with disabilities, specifically assistive hearing devices;
- Local arrangements committee folks are too busy to attend Keynote, Judy lecture or worship;
- Banner procession needs work. Roll call all attending congregations, not just those with banners;
- In registration materials add “Who will carry your congregation’s banner?”
- Get registration database set up early in the year so confirmations can be sent out; Unity used a new computer system, experienced complications and reverted to Excel;
- Send map with registration confirmation;
- Ribbon logistics – use Excel to sort. It’s a daunting task and very complex. This was the only area where the registration check-in table experienced animosity. Need a ribbon committee;
- Childcare – 15 children for approximately 20 hours of childcare. Didn’t budget enough. The tv/vcr rental was \$175. Need health info, staffing, activities and pre-registration. \$35 per child was not adequate to cover costs;
- Bookstore – have a credit card machine that accepts debit cards;
- Workshop presenters who did not register for the conference = 5;
- Amount of church staff time devoted to conference planning;
- Separate checking account for conference;
- Purchase copy paper for conference rather than use church stock;
- Have online registration and payment go directly to PSD office;
- Name badges - hard to read names;
- Youth – specify ages attending the conference (12 yrs and up);
- St Paul city sales tax was 27% on meals and AV equipment, unexpected cost;
- Local arrangements will fine tune position descriptions, purpose and responsibilities;
- Hotel map was confusing to read;
- Workshops – heard a couple of negative comments;
- Add objectives to workshop application. “What will people take away from this workshop?”
- Youth arriving to receive award Saturday evening, need more communication between local arrangements, program and awards to know when presentation is going to happen;
- Can always communicate more;
- Receive choir music ahead of time – choir director had made a choice of easier music so this was not necessary;

- Too much email! Direct emails to one person, not all. Subject line is very important, because it determines the priority. Could not keep up with email;
- Who is putting on this conference? It's not clear. Is it the district, local arrangements, or the program committee?
- Should the district president make the opening welcome? Who introduces the speakers?
- Should the district vice president MC the luncheon?
- Should the board have more of a visible presence at the conference?
- Local to local – passing the torch is an enormous task. Think about the structure of putting on a conference. Should there be 3 year terms on local arrangements? Consider staggering terms on local arrangements for continuity and mentoring opportunity;
- New ministers weren't present at introductions at the business meeting.

NEXT MEETING

Saturday, June 25, 2005. Minnesota Valley Fellowship, Bloomington MN. 10:00am – 2:00pm.

Recorded by Gina Dugan