

PSD Annual Conference Program Planning Committee

February 4, 2012

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Bloomington, MN

Attendees: Nancy Heege, Nancy Combs Morgan, Roger Upham, Robin Taylor, Kathy Bowman, Jill Schwendeman, Robyn Miessler-Kubanek, Travis Hess, Sarah Greene, Mike Schwab, Ben Wallace
Absent: Ginny Malcomson and Sam Wormley

Welcome: Robin welcomed new committee member Kathy Bowman from Davenport, visiting PSD staff member Nancy Combs-Morgan (Coordinator of Emerging Youth and Young Adult Ministries) from Kentucky, and guest Jill Schwendeman, Director of Youth Programs from WBUUC.

Minutes of 10/8/11 were approved, with a couple of spelling corrections: Nancy pointed out that the top of page 2 should read “Rev. Nancy MacDonald Ladd” and “Sharon Welch,” as the third name.

Nancy Heege – PSD Update

Nancy reported that the PSD Board has been discussing regionalization with PSD, Heartland, and CMWD. All three districts voted to recommend forming a unified governance structure by July 2013. This would turn the three districts into one large structure. They have been working together, looking at budgets and staffing. They are also looking at the future of Camp Unistar (owned by PSD), and will be asking the delegates to vote at the Annual Conference 2013.

Nancy says the merging of the districts was not about scarcity or scrambling, but about embodying a new vision for serving the congregations better and to enable us to work together better, and growing Unitarian Universalism.

PSD Annual Conference 2013 and 2014 will proceed as currently being planned, but after that they are looking at alternating between GA and Regional Conferences to reduce our carbon footprint and expenses. If we don't have a district, we don't need a business meeting. Nancy said one thought would be to have a single speaker broadcast to several locations, so that people might not have to travel as far for the regional meetings.

Roger Upham – LAC update

Everything is on schedule and going well. Conference is up on the website, registration is in progress. Roger voiced a need for an excel guru to “slice and dice” information from registration for the LAC sub committees to use. He urged finding a way to convey the information from year to year so that the LAC does not have to “reinvent the wheel” each time. (There was some discussion of “Pivot Tables” as a possible solution, which went completely over the head of the committee chair. ☺)

Roger said the Banner Committee has created over 300 “UU hankies” to hand out at the banner ceremony, and has been collecting photos from each church in the district for a slide show that will run during the parade. After the keynote speech, there will be a social hour with a jazz quartet and a cash bar.

The Keynote, Judy Lecture, etc. will be webcast live. The children's program is well-organized, and workshops look good. Saturday evening will be a sit-down dinner followed by a UU “HUUtenanny”, featuring the talented folks from WBUUC. Sunday's church service will feature Victoria and two other speakers, and the conference choir, which will sing appropriate *a cappella*

music. Several people from the Twin Cities area may take part in the conference choir, but not register for the conference. Nancy asked Roger to track who was coming just for the choir, for safety reasons, but said it was up to the LAC how they wanted to handle that. The Sunday worship service will be open to everyone.

Marketing/Publicity subcommittee is working, visiting local congregations. It was suggested that we ask Meg Riley to forward a postcard invitation to the CLF members. Who will do this?

Jill Schwendeman – The parallel youth track for the conference is “ConScience.”

The youth will be focusing on questions of conscience, and how to be supportive of military families, no matter how they feel about war. Youth will gather in the Vista rooms on the 22nd floor on Friday evening. (Access will be restricted to Youth rooms to discourage too much hanging out there.) The youth will be selling Bands for Arms – bracelets made from uniforms from all branches of the service, in support of military families. They will also be writing postcards to service members, and there will be an “offering of letters.” Youth will be making a video throughout the conference to create a discussion about Conscientious Objection.

The youth-led worship will be held on Saturday evening, right after people have a chance to get up and help themselves to the dessert bar. The evening’s entertainment will be all set up and ready to go immediately, in the hopes that people will stay right there and enjoy.

WBUUC youth will be visiting area congregations and are intending to make a 5-10 minutes video to promote the conference. Last year, about 30 youth attended the Des Moines conference. We hope to increase that number this year!

Roger said that ribbons for nametags will be provided for Military Veterans, Military Families, and those who have served their country in any branch of the military.

Sarah Greene – General Publicity Plan for PSD Conferences

Sarah discussed the challenges of getting the word out via her mailing list of about 3,000 names, a fraction of the people in our district, and how not to alienate them with mailings that are too long or too frequent? The committee expressed gratitude and approval for the 3-page publicity plan she had sent out in advance of the meeting, which suggested dates for the types of publicity we have access to (Conference web pages, exhibit table at preceding conference, fliers designed by the LAC, press releases sent to all congregations, e-Newsletter from the PSD, electronic postcards, and facebook posts that Sarah makes.)

In addition, Roger said the LAC’s publicity committee was trying to visit area churches in person to promote the event. Robin urged committee members to talk it up in their own congregations.

Robin Taylor & Nancy Heege – Revising Survey Monkey for 2012

Mike Schwab advocated for starting the survey off by framing the experience in a positive way and suggesting they come again next year: *What was the most moving or powerful part of the 2012 PSD Annual Conference? What would enrich the experience for you next year?* We also suggested changing the wording evaluating the lectures to “were they *inspiring?*” and the questions about the workshops to “were they *engaging?*” Another obvious update would be to change “Youth Con” to “Youth Track/”ConScience” Activities. Nancy said she would make the appropriate changes. Sarah said she would gear it up to be sent to conference participants on the Sunday morning of the conference, so we could get people to fill it out while their ideas were fresh and they were feeling inspired.

Last year, we gained valuable feedback for the conference from reading the comments on Survey Monkey. Several of the “conference themes” suggested by participants are reflected in our workshop choices this year.

Robin Taylor - Program Committee Responsibilities

Robin reported that Mark Ritchie, our MN Secretary of State, and a UU from Minneapolis, had agreed to be our backup speaker for both the Keynote and Judy Lectures. Robin will contact him in early March to remind him and firm up plans. If he has to speak, he would receive the fees that were intended for that speaker, so we would not charge him to register for the conference.

Mike Schwab agreed to be the Speaker Handler for Jim Eller, assuming he returns safely from hiking the Grand Canyon in time! Robin will be the S.H. for Tom Wiener (pronounced “weener”).

Robin asked if the committee could help with the responsibility of writing the thank you notes to workshop presenters, because it will be about 50 notes this year—too much for one person. Ginny Malcomson will print up the address labels. Robin will bring the notecards to the Annual Conference for distribution.

Sam Wormley – Area Coordinator Update (via speaker phone)

The Site Selection Committee is chaired by Elaine Kresse. Conference 2013 is set for April 5-7 in Cedar Rapids, IA; Conference 2014 will be held in Topeka, KS on April 11-13. Rochester is interested in hosting 2015.

Annual Conference Awards Committee – is chaired by Anna Ness. They will present awards at the lunch meeting, and will coordinate the timing with Roger.

Judy Lecturer – 2013 – We had talked at our October meeting about having Bill McKibben, but Sam has not contacted him. He has been working with Erv Klaus to see if they can find someone just as eloquent who is local. Sam said he would hold off on inviting anyone until we get the report from Ben about Patel.

Nancy suggested that we may need to adjust the schedule for the conference in 2013. She suggested clearing 3-4 hours on Saturday to have discussions with the delegates about regionalization, as the PSD could be dissolved as early as Summer 2013. She also suggested only having one major speaker for the weekend to save time for the topic (and save money). She said that even if the PSD was dissolved, we would still go forward with AC 2013 and 2014. If the regions get bigger, the concern is that the annual conferences would not be accessible to the average person because of the travel. We need to look at how we gather, how often, and in what kind of locales.

Ben Wallace – Judy Lecturer search for 2013

Ben did contact the Dalai Lama’s office, but the DL is not scheduling speaking arrangements in 2013.

He has been in contact with Eboo Patel in Chicago who doesn’t usually book out further than 6 months, and who normally charges \$12,500 for a speaking engagement. Kathy Bowman said she met him at Augustana College in the fall, and he mentioned that his book was published by Beacon Press. Ben thought he would use this information to try and forge a new understanding with Patel, and try his best sales pitch to get him to speak at our conference in 2013 at a reduced rate. Ben will provide a firm answer to this committee by April 1st.

There was discussion about collaborating with local colleges to bring Patel to our conference. Someone suggested using an organization called EventBrite which sells tickets. Nancy cautioned about going to far out on a limb. When Davenport tried to bring the community in to hear John McKutcheon, who was very expensive, she thought they needed to use a lot of personal “grants” from LAC members.

If we can't get Patel, Travis Hess suggested Dr. Rebecca Parker, John Burens, or Naomi King. Naomi King sounded like a favorite. (Post-meeting feedback suggests that we would want to talk to people who have had the opportunity to hear her speak to a group this size before committing to contact her.)*

***POST-MEETING SUGGESTION FROM NANCY HEEGE:** I've had a suggestion that we invite Harlan Limpert to be the Friday night speaker at the Annual Conference in Cedar Rapids in 2013. Harlan is a UU minister, lives in the Twin Cities when he's not working in Boston, is the VP for Ministries and Congregational Support at the UUA. He has his fingers on the pulse of all that's happening in UU circles; is an inspirational speaker; would be terrific at speaking to the future of UUism as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the district and also making a decision about regionalization. I support this idea. ~Nancy

Harlan Limpert

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SECONDED BY MIKE SCHWAB: I have had the privilege of working a little with Harlan and he is great. I completely support the suggestion. -- M

Travis Hess & Robyn Miessler-Kubaneck – Conference 2013 Update

Robyn and Travis had met with designers to work on their conference logo. The designers found our theme a little cumbersome to work with (“Inspiring the Future We Hope to Live In.”) The designers suggested shortening it to: “Inspire the Future We Envision.” Mike and Kathy expressed some concern that the theme was too vague. Robin reported that we had looked for a theme that could be a bit of an umbrella to include the topics saving the environment, working for social justice, growing our denomination, and community-building. After some discussion, the shortened theme was approved: **Inspire the Future We Envision**. Everyone appreciated the beautiful and eye-catching graphic designed by the Cedar Rapids team.

We considered that there could be different models for how this conference would work: Inspiring speaker vs. Facilitated Discussion with an outside facilitator, or even a variety of short lectures by different speakers (5-15 minutes) interspersed with workshops. There could also be a “delegate track” and a “nondelegate track,” as we realize that many people would not travel to Cedar Rapids if they didn't think they were going to receive any personal enrichment. Everyone agreed that the business meeting should be at 4 p.m. on Saturday so that the delegates would have had plenty of time for discussion about regionalization before they voted.

We reminded ourselves that this would be the 50th (and perhaps final?) anniversary of the PSD. At a previous meeting, we had discussed how this might be a useful thing to note in celebrating at and decorating for the conference, but wasn't enough to stand alone as a theme.

The meeting was pronounced a success, and we look forward to seeing each other in April!

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Taylor, Chair, PSD Program Planning Committee

3/1/12