

**Prairie Star District Annual Conference
Program Planning Committee
Saturday, June 16, 2012
UU Fellowship of Ames, Iowa**

M I N U T E S

ATTENDING: Kathy Bowman, Mike Schwab, Robin Taylor, Roger Upham, Ben Wallace, Maria Wilson; Sam Wormley; Nancy Heege; Robyn-Miessler-Kubaneck, Rev. Tom Capo; Joanne Roudebush and Phil Roudebush

Robin opened the meeting and welcomed the Roudebushes, who will be the co-chairs for AC 2014 in Topeka. **We began by sharing a favorite moment from AC 2012.** The minutes from the conference Debriefing on 4/15/12 were approved. Our newest committee member, Maria Wilson, was welcomed when she arrived. Thank you to Ben Wallace for taking notes!

Program Coordinator Update: Sam Wormley

Sam said he had been the Program Area Coordinator since 2001, and is starting his 12th and final year. He gave a brief reflection of his job and suggested four names for possible successors. Nancy Heege will follow up with recruitment efforts to replace him.

PSD Staff and Board Update: Nancy Heege

Nancy said that things are pretty intense right now with lots going on. Regionalization will enable us to cut some costs and better serve the districts. Staff is working on a timeline to divide up work and coming up with a plan for Camp Unistar, which is currently run by the PSD. She said that AC 2014 will still happen, because we have a contract with the hotel. It is possible that the main event may be live-streamed and shared with other locations. She said that other districts don't all have the same culture of getting together beyond the congregational level like we do.

She said that the PSD is hiring a **new regional web coordinator** this summer, but that they don't know what registration will look like next year. Drupal 7 wasn't the best program. Robyn said it would be nice to test the registration system before we start registering people for AC 2013!

Nancy pointed out that the PSD was officially incorporated in 1964, but that it was started in 1963, so we should go ahead with celebrating the 50th anniversary in 2013

Planning for AC 2013

Robin reminded everyone that the goals of this conference are to:

1. *Inspire the Future We Envision*
2. Prepare and inform delegates to vote on issues of Regionalization
3. Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the PSD
4. Create a meaningful multigenerational conference for families/individuals of all ages

Kathy Burek, PSD President, was unable to join us in person, but Nancy shared her request for a 3-hour business meeting on Saturday afternoon, and to avoid skits that could be perceived as making fun of legitimate concerns about regionalization. We agreed to make Friday night more of an anniversary celebration and focus on our shared UU and PSD history. We agreed that if we had PSD Birthday Cake, there needed to be several types, including vegan and gluten-free. Joanne suggested cupcakes to allow that flexibility. Roger reminded us that a party is nice, but "a party costs!" There may be ways we can defray the costs by having congregations pitch in, although the hotel probably won't allow outside food.

Kathy wanted to make sure there would be a parliamentarian for the business meeting, and everyone hopes it will not really take three hours! (Tom suggested back-up programming, just in case. Joanne thought people would enjoy doing their own thing, so perhaps a list of nearby options would suffice.)

Mike said that last year, Ferry Beach had an intense meeting at which they used a professional moderator to conduct the meeting to free the president from any perception of favoritism, etc. Allows president to have opinion. Nancy said it was the District's job to ensure there was a parliamentarian. Tom thought his congregation could provide a back-up moderator. Mike suggested asking Mary Richards to be the moderator.

Nancy reminded the LAC that they are responsible for finding a place for the Board to meet on Thursday and Friday.

Ben advocated for holding a Bridging Ceremony during the youth-led worship on Saturday night that would start to be a tradition. He said youth build community very quickly, and that perhaps YAs who are involved in COA would attend the conference to watch their youth "bridge". He offered to help with this if the LAC chooses to go forward with this idea. Mike said that getting a minister involved in bridging would lend gravitas. Roger said that bridging is something that is done at White Bear in the congregations, and wondered if it would have as much meaning at the Annual Conference? Tom worried that some youth wouldn't get to the conference until the middle of the night... Nancy pointed out that the conference schedule was the final decision of the LAC, so Robin began with a proposed schedule that would incorporate the board's requests for a 3-hr. business meeting with flex time at the end of the day, and 15 minutes of passing time between activities. Below is the amended schedule as discussed at the meeting:

Proposed Format of the Conference

7-9 p.m. Friday Night Welcome & PSD Anniversary Celebration

Possible Elements to the evening (*=Required)

*Banner Parade - LAC (photos were popular; please say something about each church!)

*Welcome to Cedar Rapids, Orientation to Conference Schedule & Hotel Logistics - LAC

*Opening Prayer - Something to ground and bond us--LAC

Keynote Speaker (Stefan Jonasson was suggested because he is funny, uplifting, and will enable bonding) to focus on UU, PSD history (30-45 minutes)

Singing! -- LAC

Something for children? (Tom suggested a kids' Show Choir from Cedar Rapids??)

Ritual?

Information for Delegates ? - PSD Staff

*Happy Anniversary!

Cake?

9 p.m. Cash bar/social hour??

Saturday Conference

7:00-8:45 Breakfast

7:00-9:00 Exhibits (Can they be set up the night before? Tom said they would be in a locked room, so he thought so. This will be the same room where refreshments are served, which should give people a chance to browse the exhibits.)

9:00-10:00 a.m. **Judy Lecture: *Inspiring the Future We Envision??*** (shorten to 1 hour)

The Rev. Christine Robinson ~ the future of Unitarian Universalism? Tom suggested the message be more about who we want to be as UUs rather than "regionalization."

10:00-10:15 a.m. **Message from Board Pres or District Exec** (Kathy & Nancy can duke this one out!) tying PSD history with Judy message about going forward? Dovetail our proud past with our power to influence the future!

10:30-11:45 a.m. **Workshop A: *Inspiring* our Region= Workshops for Delegates?**

(These could be informational/discussions)

Inspiring Our Congregations? - follow Judy theme

Noon- 1 p.m. **Awards Luncheon**

Grace/Prayer/Blessing-LAC Minister or intern

Announcements/Housekeeping - LAC

Awards Program- AC Awards Committee

5-minute Spotlight on Regionalization? (Nancy or Kathy - it is up to you!)

**Some people noted how difficult it is to make announcements when people are eating. Is it better to move announcements to the middle or the end, when people have had a chance to get some visiting out of their system??

***Tom suggested using visuals and a way to create a moving tone before the 3-hour meeting.

1:15 - 2:30 **Workshop B: Inspiring Our Communities?** Workshops on Social Action

Conference Choir Rehearsal

Ministers' Meeting* (If Christine & Stefan do workshops, let's make sure that ministers can attend them! The meeting could be in A or B slot)

2:45-5:45 (3-Hour) **Business Meeting for Delegates**

(And while the Delegates are busy...)

2:45-4:00 **Workshop C: Inspiring our Congregations?** (Leadership skills, etc.)

~followed by a choice of Active/Passive activities—

--We discussed the possibility of not requiring people to sign up for these in advance, but perhaps offering a list of suggestions? Tom and Robyn said there were points of interest within walking distance or shuttle bus from the conference center, and maybe people would be drawn to the idea of exploring some of these instead, i.e. the new indoor market, park, and walking paths...

~Phil noted that if we keep it too unstructured, it would be a "logistical nightmare."

~Robin suggested that workshop C could *include* some of these activities... Tom suggested that the LAC could provide the alternate activities. A couple of rooms could be reserved for "coffee and conversation" in the afternoon, or yoga...

4:15 p.m.-5:45 **Active Activities- "I want to DO something!"** :

Walk/yoga

Craft-making

Music-making—jam session? (can't disturb others)

Guided Volunteer Activity, related to talk?

Tour of People's Church?

4:15 p.m.-5:45 **Passive Activities - "I want time to process!/relax!"** :

Guided Writing Exercises

Meditation

Coffee and Conversation (Small Group Discussions)

Happy Hour and Small Group Discussions?

Nap in your room...

6 p.m. **DINNER**

Blessing/Prayer

Summary of Business Meeting Votes - District Executive

7:15 p.m. **Youth-led Worship**

8:00 p.m. **Entertainment...Cash Bar???**

Other discussion:

Joanne suggested having a webinar for delegates to help shorten the business meeting.

Tom suggested having people from other districts share their history in workshop C. Mike suggested,

"Getting to Know Our Neighbors." We thought it would be fun to get churches to partner with other

churches within our new Mid-America district!

12:30-1:30 p.m. Potluck Lunch ~ Thanks for the fabulous food, everyone!

1:30 p.m. LAC 2012 Final Budget Report ~Roger Upham

Roger reported that his committee had accomplished the amazing, and come out ahead! With all but one bill received, they predicted a total profit of around \$3,300 to be split between the PSD and WBUUC. They also received \$700 in donations garnered by credit cards from the registration process, which went to the scholarship fund for attendees. Congratulations, Roger!

He noted that 90 percent of those attending the conference used the Early Bird registration discount. Only about 5 people walked in on the day of the conference. They had 370 bodies register, including the children, and another 30 volunteers. They offered their White Bear volunteers a \$50 discount to attend the conference, but didn't charge them at all if they only worked and didn't attend (which accounted for another 20 or so people). They budgeted for professional childcare, all of whom had been cleared, trained and vetted. They also paid their staff an honorarium to help with their travel expenses and additional hours, but only after they knew they were going to make a profit.

Survey Monkey Evaluations (Planning for AC 2013 and 2014)

Roger - Facilities/Conference Logistics/Meals/Exhibit Space, etc.

Roger noted that you can't rely on people to read a lot, so you have to get them the information in a variety of ways. He said food is the biggest expense, and that the hotel was willing to accommodate a lot of personal preferences, but you had to know to ASK for it. Comments on food ranged from "Excellent" to "Horrible." Most comments were very positive about the facilities and exhibit spaces. The biggest complaint was a lack of maps in the packets, which had been planned for and then was forgotten. The bright orange "PSD Hospitality" hats that volunteers wore were very useful.

Ben - Youth and Young Adults--what worked, what was missing?

People were overwhelmingly positive about the youth service on Saturday night. The best thing was having Jill and her team focus on youth integration.

Maria noted that the young adults needed some sort of mixer. Robyn will try to see if she can find some young adults to meet with her at the August meeting.

Ginny - Children and Families—people wanted more of a plan for younger youth, and wished there had been more information on the registration and youth registration available upfront

Registration-Many complaints about the registration process. More work needs to be done on this. We would like to see some sort of confirmation that says, "Thank you for registering. We look forward to seeing you."

Kathy - Needs of ministers/PSD Board/delegates/people with disabilities/general participants.

Kathy couldn't find any complaints, which Robin pointed out was a good thing (and an improvement over some years!). The LAC was careful to add a ramp this year up to the stage for any awards recipients with mobility issues.

Mike - Where did people find the most meaning/satisfaction in their experience? - People seemed to appreciate the thematic coordination that was visible from beginning to end, and all the way through the workshop selections. People found this conference to be very professional. It would be a mistake to make a big change in format at this stage.

Robyn - Friday night opening ceremony and Sunday Worship- Comments were overwhelmingly positive, although comments ranged from "fantastic" to "disappointing" about the speaker. Most people really liked the ritual recognizing veterans. Most liked the banner parade. *Many* requested more singing to build community.

Robin - workshops- People tended to be slightly more positive about workshops in the A and B track. Not sure if this was content-based, or time-of-day-based? Most popular workshops seemed to be those with a participatory requirement (conference choir, guided writing, congregational conflict, and Unistar), but absolutely nothing "bombed." Tom offered to start a google doc with tips for a successful workshop. Phil suggested looking at the Heath Bros. book, *Made to Stick*, about how to make a good presentation:

<http://www.heathbrothers.com/madetostick/>

Some people felt that workshop titles were confusing. Perhaps we can offer suggestions when we accept or reject workshops this year.

We talked about the importance of a welcoming packet with maps and a message from the host congregation and district executive or Bd. President. Robin and Robyn will coordinate closer to the time...

Theme for AC 2014 in Topeka (co-hosted by Manhattan and Lawrence, KS)

Joanne said that the churches are very excited about hosting this, and that the Ramada has already bent over backwards for them. Phil and Joanne talked about how Lawrence was settled by UUs and Topeka's history as the city whose case, *Brown v. the Board of Education*, landed the Supreme Court decision that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," and suggested a theme related to civil rights. They envisioned a conference that would enable people to visit the National Historic Site nearby. We also discussed the irony that Kansas is the wheat state, and wheat is so plentiful in a country where hunger still exists. After much discussion about how best to follow the Justice GA theme, we voted to recommend to the Board that the **theme for 2014 be "Hunger for Justice."**

Update from LAC

We discussed several different speakers at the meeting. Since then, Stefan Jonasson has agreed to be our Friday Keynote and Christine Robinson has agreed to be our Saturday Judy lecturer. For the record, in case anyone backs out, here are the other names we came up with:

Tom Belote

Michael Durell - author of "The Almost Church" and "The Almost Church Revisited"

Marilyn Sewell - recommended by Kathy Bowman, who heard her speak

Rev. Dr. Nicole Kirk - looking to the future

Aaron White - 2nd minister at 1st Dallas, a very inspiring and motivating speaker

Robyn and Tom suggested that we meet at the church at 10 a.m. for our August 11 meeting. We will have our traditional potluck lunch, and hope to take a peek at the conference hotel at the end of the day, despite the fact that it will be busy with the biggest Shriner Convention in the country! We all agreed it might be useful to see what the hotel looks like when it is busy. Robyn said she may be able to arrange for home hospitality if anyone needed it in order to come to the meeting. Please contact her.

Next meeting: Saturday, August 11, 2012

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

People's Church Unitarian Universalist

Cedar Rapids, IA

****POTLUCK LUNCH at noon**

Committee Homework:

Nancy: invite Stefan Jonasson to speak (Done!)

Robin: invite Christine Robinson to speak (Done!)

Roger: send final budget for AC2012 to Robin, Sam, and Sarah

Tom: start a Google doc about how to give a good workshop (Done!)

Everyone: Please review conference description (sent in a previous email) and confirm/suggest changes to Robin

...then Robin will send final description to Sarah for website

Please add your thoughts to Tom's workshop document and "reply all"

Robyn: send final logo to Sarah Greene for website

Recruit for LAC, begin planning schedule and budget

Robin: send "Letters of Understanding" to our speakers

Note: I have asked Stefan and Christine to send me headshots and bios for the website, but so far no response

Thank you to Ben for taking the minutes, and to all of you for driving to Ames on a lovely June Day! I look forward to seeing you next month.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Taylor, Chair

*“We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.” ~**Maya Angelou***