

MISSION: The Annual Conference Program Planning Committee chooses the Annual Conference theme, arranges for Keynote and Judy Lecture speakers, solicits and organizes workshop presenters, and provides support for (and guidance to) the Local Arrangements Committee of the hosting congregation.

**Prairie Star District Annual Conference
Program Planning Committee (PPC)
Saturday, August 11, 2012
The People' s Church UU, Cedar Rapids, IA**

ATTENDING: Robin Taylor (chair), Ginny Malcomson, Mike Schwab, Roger Upham, Ben Wallace, Maria Wilson; Sarah Greene (PSD District Administrator); Robyn Miessler-Kubaneck (LAC Chair, 2013), Rev. Tom Capo (Cedar Rapids, IA); Phil and Joanne Roudebush (LAC Co-Chairs, 2014).

GUESTS: Graham Kreicker, a UUA trustee from Lawrence, KS.

ABSENT: Kathy Bowman, Rev. Lisa Doege (Nora, MN), and Sam Wormley (Program Area Coordinator)

A G E N D A

10 a.m. Chalice Lighting

"This is a religion which can save lives and the world. People seek a spiritual path that integrates their whole selves, that inspires awe, that celebrates beauty, and grounds justice. We can offer a vision of the good life, and the tools to make it real."

~ Rev. Matthew Johnson-Doyle, Senior Minister at the UU Church of Rockford, Illinois

Introductions & Check-In

Robin asked people to reflect on the chalice lighting, and say a few words about what resonated with them. Responses included:

- Connection, place for youth
- Freedom to seek, and support in seeking
- A supportive community without the pressure to believe something I didn't want to believe
- Universal Spirituality—a spiritual connection to each other
- Embodied Spirituality—a connection to each other that comes with a physical sense of connection
- Integrates our Whole Selves – integrity, capacity for wholeness. Service to others. Tools to make our congregation stronger
- A little crying – moves me
- Share an idea of spirit that is broad and whole, and willingness to open their arms to anyone – idea of wholeness is important. Each time we join, we have a chance to be more fully ourselves.
- We save lives as well as souls
- 3rd generation UU. Spiritual path that integrates our whole lives.
- Inspire – Inspired by the lives of the people in my congregation and how they put that spirituality in action. Serve in community, government, school board, integrate morals into their lives to make hard choices. Inspired by the things we do in our lives that help others.

10:10 a.m. Program Committee Update ~ Robin

Approval of Minutes from 6/16/12 , with commentary by Sarah Greene. Sarah pointed out that the Awards luncheon was not up to the PPC, that is the business of the LAC and the Awards Committee. Robin noted a few years ago that some ministers complained that there wasn't a prayer before lunch. **Robin will ask Sam to pass along this recommendation to the Awards Committee** . It was noted that the awards need to begin while people are still eating, so there is enough time for everything. Sarah advised that announcements be saved until the end

Keynote Lecturer - Stefan Jonasson has confirmed, but not sent in his Letter of Understanding. **Robin will call him after Sept. 1 to request a speech title and description.** He will talk about UU and district history.

Judy Lecturer - Christine Robinson has confirmed, and is interested in selling some books while she is here. She will talk about bringing us into the future, asking us some challenging questions. Managed to grow her church by several hundred people over the last few years. **Robin will call her after Sept. 1 to request speech title and description.**

Back-up Speaker - Two names were suggested: Thom Belote? Brian Esslinger?

Call for Workshops - <http://www.psduua.org/AnnualConference2013/WorkshopApplication>

We want to have fewer workshops this year because of the longer business meeting? We would like to encourage presenters who could address the theme.

Graham suggested that **Kathy Burek and Nancy might want to create a morning workshop to lay the groundwork for the business to be dealt with?**

Mike suggested breaking Regionalization into pieces: What is this going to mean for the clergy, RE, annual conference, and the congregational connection to a higher organizational level?

Tom - When we did a soliciting of ideas and feelings about regionalization, some information is useful, but there are many people who want to come and talk about things that don't have to do with regionalization. Most people didn't know about it and weren't interested in the details. If we are going to get people to come as the conference, we are going to need to offer workshops that are meaningful on different levels.

Joanne will ask if Thom Belote would be interested in leading a workshop to talk about his vision of the future, what they are doing in his congregation and why She would also like to have a conversation about "after Justice GA." Talk about what happened, make the connection between the GA we just had on the UUA level. Can be a bridge workshop into the next GA in Louisville, KY.

Robin suggested that many congregations struggle with the transition from paper to paperless newsletters, and a workshop on this topic might be useful. Anyone know any good presenters on church communication? **Robin will ask Kevin Watson if he might be interested this year.**

Tom - One of the things that Christine is going to be talking about is reaching out beyond the walls. One of those things is multimedia, how do we connect that to spirit & soul? We can show images on a screen, we can tweet, but how do we make that meaningful? **Robin will ask Christine if she could address the use of multimedia to connect to spirit and soul in her workshop.**

Ginny would like to see a workshop on social media and connecting with kids. How do you create an intentional Facebook community for your church? Phil - how do you draft and manage a social media policy? **Everyone—could you suggest anyone from your contacts who might be willing to serve on a Social Media Panel to discuss this—need a strong facilitator?** How do you build a Young Adult group? How do you deal with problems, people acting out, etc.?

Ben will ask Leslie Mills and Kent to do a workshop about their trip to Justice GA, etc. How they fundraised, planned, made it happen.

Ginny would like to see a workshop on Youth Groups—how to make them active, how to do service projects, etc. Perhaps Leslie could combine these two subjects?

Tom suggested that the youth may like to lead some workshops. **Tom will check with the youth of his church to see if any of them would like to present a workshop.** Ginny suggested playing on the *Hunger Games* theme. (*The Hunger Games* is a popular book, and now movie, about a dystopian future in which children are selected by lottery to fight/trick/kill each other in the Games until only one is left, for the amusement and appeasement of the administration—and to the horror of the families and communities who must sacrifice their children this way.)

Tom will ask his wife if she would be willing to lead a workshop on the virtual world "Second Life Unitarian Church" in which she is heavily involved.

Ben suggested a workshop on how to worship when church stops being a spiritual place for you (i.e., you are staff, and you are burnt out...) Graham pointed out that the delegates voted at GA to eliminate the distinction between "fellowship" and "church" and use "congregation" instead. Ben wondered how we could reach those who might have been turned off by a religion in the past and haven't found their way back to a church yet but still have a need for spiritual connection and community building. **(Ben, any ideas about where to go to solicit such a workshop?)**

10:30 a.m. Final "Final" Budget from AC 2012 ~ Roger

Roger - We didn't end up with an excess of \$3,000. We neglected to look at the \$1400 that we had allocated to the PPC. There were a few other things. The upshot of it all is that White Bear church will be sending the district a check for \$385. There was an excess of about \$38. It was not easy to align the budget with the bookkeeping that was taken.

Sarah - Make sure your bookkeeping is set up to use the budget you submit for the conference.

Roger will email the final budget to Sarah for tax purposes, and to Sam and Robin for conference record-

keeping.

Sarah - The congregation always comes out whole. If the conference goes negative, the district pays.

Roger noted that the congregation came out feeling *great* about the conference.

PSD Program Planning Budget Line ~ Sarah

Sarah passed out an expense report for the PSD Annual Conference Program Area (Fiscal Year 2011-12), which showed a total of \$1,186.93 spent (85%) out of the \$1,400 budget that each LAC is required to put in their conference budget each year to help defray any costs such as travel for the site selection committee, Awards, printing thank you notes, etc. Last year, the budget picked up the cost of renting our meeting room at the conference hotel in February, and paid for our lunch. Each year, whatever the committees spend is covered by the fund. Leftover money accumulates in case it is needed for a future conference.

Sarah said that each committee has to think about how they want to spend money for people to come to the meetings. It is important for the committee to decide how things will be reimbursed. Robin noted that last year the committee agreed to fly Ben in for the winter meeting in Mpls. so that he didn't have to drive 6. hours each way, which was the biggest expenditure. (thanks! ~Ben) Other committee members donated driving time and we all paid our own hotel expenses for the meeting.

COMMITTEE REIMBURSEMENT POLICY: Sarah said the PSD has long had a policy that we would rather the volunteers not have to pay to volunteer. Some choose to view their travel expenses as a donation to the PSD. Sarah said that if anyone submits a request for mileage reimbursement, the PSD will reimburse it. If anyone would like a tax receipt for donated mileage, she will send that as well. Please note that actual receipts must be submitted for reimbursement of gas. *Estimated mileage is paid back at the reduced rate of only 14 cents/mile!!*

Joanne asked for clarification as to whether the members of the LAC are members of the Program Planning Committee. [Local Arrangements Committee members are not members of the Program Planning Committee but invited guests at PPC meetings. The PPC budget was intended to help pay expenses for LAC members to attend PPC meetings in addition to paying PPC members expenses. LAC should include conference planning and conference attendance expenses for LAC in the conference budget. \(Clarification of minutes added by Sarah Greene on 8/27/12\)](#)

10:45 a.m. Local Arrangements 2013 Update ~ Robyn

DATE: April 5-7, 2013

THEME: *Inspire the Future We Envision*

LOCATION: Marriott Cedar Rapids

Reminder: 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

Robyn passed around a draft of a "Save the Date" Poster for comments and feedback. **Robyn will send the final poster to Sarah Green by the end of August so the poster can be distributed to churches as they gear up for the church year.** This will have minimal information on it, but is geared to be seen from across the room and fix the date and the handsome logo in people's minds!

We discussed why people come to Annual Conferences (Because they talk to each other, get new ideas and useful information to help them in their church roles?) and considered other ways of attracting them to come.

Sarah reminded us that the PSD has a Facebook page. Ben suggested possibly having Sarah post a video of Christine Robinson on our page to get people excited about hearing her speak. We wondered about how to connect with regions beyond ours? Direct invitation, people to people probably works best. Have

announcements that are targeted to different parts of the community: Ministers, DREs, Administrators, etc..

Robyn reported that she has found a Facilities person for her team. Ginny suggested using suites instead of conference rooms for the childcare so we could bring in our own snack food, which would keep costs down. Will high speed internet be available for free? Noticed website says high speed internet for a fee.

Youth - Cedar Rapids has a new DRE. Robyn has talked to her about the conference. She and the youth advisor, who is going to coordinate the youth, are going to meet next week. **(Robyn: When the discussion is had about Youth Programming, can you bring up District Bridging Ceremony for Youth graduating from Youth to Young Adult? Ben has offered to consult on this.)**

Robyn has someone signed up to coordinate AV - he has some of his own fancy cameras, is setting up his own company. Need to schedule a meeting with him and the facility coordinator. She has connected with Mark Gibbons, will work with him and hotel people to work out AV needs.

Robyn is working on recruiting a workshop coordinator. We clarified that the PPC will select the workshops. The role of the Workshop Coordinator is to ensure that every workshop has a space that fits the # of people who signed up for it, and gets the equipment and the seating arrangement they requested, including a piano for the choir rehearsal. Robin explained that the workshop application makes it clear that presenters need to bring their own **laptops and projectors** (or borrow from their churches) to the conference so that the LAC doesn't have to worry about the astronomical cost of renting them from the hotel.

Tom - PSD Board will meet at the Church on Friday. Robyn - should be able to accommodate them. Also having pre-conference **workshop** at church.

Sunday AM - Worship service will be in the ballroom, breakfast in Rosewood Room

Roger - AV - when he was announcing the speakers, etc. there was a monitor up front so that Roger could see what was coming next, which was very helpful..

Robyn has recruited an entertainment coordinator - they are looking at doing something similar to White Bear's Variety Show, having church members provide the music. Based on feedback from last year, thinking of doing a coffee house, maybe soliciting people who are attending and might want to perform.

Colin Ryan is a professional comedian in the congregation who would be good for entertainment, look at him potentially for MC.

Tom - 30 different vendors in a local market that will be opening in November, so there will be a place nearby with lots of things for people to see.

12 p.m. Sermon Competition on the Conference Theme ~ Lisa

Although Lisa couldn't make it due to a flat tire en route, Robin presented Lisa's idea to have a sermon contest on the conference theme. The winning sermon could be made available to be presented by a lay member of any church in the PSD or region, ideally freeing up the ministers to attend the PSD conference, and getting everyone in the district thinking about the same thing.

Tom - when they do it at General Assembly, one of the workshops is the winning sermon writer presenting the sermon and discussing it. We agreed that would be a fine idea, and suggested offering the conference registration fee as the prize, if the LAC could incorporate one free registration into their budget.

Tom wondered if it could be videotaped and recorded, so another church could project it if they wanted to. Can we get a MidAmerica Region YouTube channel?

Sarah pointed out there is a District policy on creating new awards. Would need to come up with the proposal. The committee thought this would be defined as a *contest* more than an *award*, but agreed to run it by Nancy Heege for approval.

Tom pointed out that it would be important to have a cross-section of judges that would be willing to choose it.

We discussed whether the sermon needs to be given at the congregation ahead of time as a requirement. The upside is that it gives people a chance to practice it, and would give people a chance for it to be vetted. The downside is that if we require it to be presented at a church, that will hinder who can and can't enter, and be one more hurdle for presenters. Ben - this gives us an opportunity to look at Second Life UU church, CLF etc. Robin thought a good sermon should stand on the merits of the writing, since that is how we are going to judge it, and doesn't need to have been given to an audience. Robin agreed to contact Lisa for ideas and draft a proposal/call for entries to run by Sarah and Nancy.

12:30-1:30 p.m. Potluck Lunch

1:30 p.m. LAC 2014 Update - Phil & Joanne Roudebush, Co-Chairs

DATE: April 11-13, 2014

THEME: *Hunger for Justice*

LOCATION: Ramada Convention Center Downtown Topeka

420 Southeast 6th Ave., I-70 at W. Exit 362B-E. 361B

Topeka, KS. 66607

<http://www.ramada.com/hotels/kansas/topeka/ramada-convention-center-downtown-topeka/hotel-overview>

Joanne and Phil Roudebush reported that the theme works well—they have one logo submission already, and are working on contacting some local artists for help. That is their number one task right now. Joanne said it has been tremendously helpful to listen Roger, Robyn, and Ginny about their thoughts regarding the conference and how to make it better.

Have great confidence in the facility and have plenty of room to work with. Feeling good that the space will work well physically. Have some resources in Topeka for programming, etc. The first task is to create the logo, then get the key people in place on the LAC (like the Registrar! per Roger) They are communicating with the SCORE congregations in the south PSD.

Mike - Do you think the cluster meeting this fall could be used as an opportunity to leverage for conference planning. Usually is October. Joanne - may be the same time as the PSD Planning Committee Meeting. Would be a great idea if we can make it work.

Robin - Looking at 2014, possibly having speakers broadcast to other regions. This conference will be a little different than the others. Joanne - Once you have it digitally, you can share it wherever you need to. The important thing is to capture, produce, and create it.

Phil - question is that there will be a regional board, will that be a regional board decision? Regardless they are planning on marketing to the greater region. Joanne - Per Nancy, we will have a meeting in 2014, but may broadcast content to other locations.

Joanne - for 2014, a morning business meeting would be preferred, as we are looking at time for an advocacy act during the conference. Social justice, something intergenerational during Saturday for people to participate in.

Have a very gifted folk singer, Ann Zimmerman. (Ann has sung at cluster many time, she was commissioned by the Quakers to write a song for them and their meeting.) Looking at having her develop a theme song for *Hunger for Justice*, and have her lead a sing-a-long. Lawrence, area was settled by UUs. Look at Friday night to possibly tell the story about the area and who settled it.

Gifted humorist. Tom Avril, he is a UU at heart even if he doesn't know it. Working to brainstorm and find those elements to put together a great conference. Second *Hunger Games* movie is coming out Nov 2012—will look for a possible tie-in.

Keynote Speaker and Judy Lecturer ideas:

- had a couple that came to Lawrence, folk singers. They travelled with the freedom bus that travelled through the south with the UUs last year. Tell stories and sing. They aren't local but certainly are along the lines of the theme and will build on the worship.
- Nate Walker as a speaker? Minister at First Philadelphia, spent two years at Plum Village and talks about Positive Protesting. Exceptional at drawing people in and having them tell their life stories.

Mike - One perspective - Nate's congregation is a church with a huge community center. Who does that sound like? Have Nate as Keynote, Belote as Judy.

Nate Walker Bio - <http://www.psduua.org/Camps/CampStarTrail2012/Staff>

Arizona Immigration Ministry - Susan Fredricks-Gray - a great speaker, who spoke at Justice GA <http://www.uua.org/ga/2012/185401.shtml>

Peter Mayer - Blue Boat Home - He had previously told his story as a Judy Lecturer in Duluth through music. Speaker - Linda Barnes <http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/186150.shtml>

Look at doing something similar for Topeka. Trying to find creative ways to blend the message and create an experience for the conference.

Open call for music - looking at having a contest for people to write songs for the conference.

Shawna Foster - might be good for judging the sermon contest.

Justice GA this year:

Graham noted that he was very apprehensive about the idea of a Justice GA, especially after the previous chair quit last June, leaving only a year for the whole planning. "It was a great. They planned it well so that when it was hot outside they were inside, when it was cooler outside they were outside." Thematic structure, working closely with partners, was a big success. Not to be totally publicity oriented, but when they did the action, it was carried in 308 papers. The next day the Guardian in London called and did a 20-minute interview with Peter Morales. Had reflection groups, met from 12-12:30pm each day in the convention center. Was well received, talked about what was going on, what people got out of it, people you encountered. There was full integration of the youth.

Joanne said they are hoping to have some outside time at their conference.

Robyn said there is a park across the street from the 2013 conference hotel where people could go and hang out.

Robin asked the committee what they want to see at the PSD Annual Conferences:

Graham - parade the banners out in the public.

Phil - get our hands dirty with a service project

Robin - Some way of having small conversations happening. Credo, Reflection groups, Small Group Ministry.

Joanne - Really like the idea of having an informal coffee house type of setting. Find myself resenting the table topics, because I don't want to talk about stewardship at breakfast, but value the "unstructured" conversations about stewardship. Having that time to give people to do something else other than workshops. Make the schedule a little less decompressed.

Robyn - The survey feedback indicated that people want time to do passive activities, relax, and other hands-on activities. Robyn wondered if there been any discussion on extending the time of the conference? If they wanted to incorporate some social justice activities, etc.. before or after the

conference to do some advocacy? Friday being a business day, maybe that would work. Saturday is already jam-packed. If you want more, then you have to take something out. Mike - think about the normal being an annual service project that all of the participants go to. Imagining the possibility for how to structure things. Service can be anything, doesn't have to be a protest.

Ben - building community: Laugh-Cry-Sing!

Sarah - Full integration of the youth: having youth being involved in the workshops, being the speakers, participating in the events.

Ginny - have a meal or an experience where we mix people up and include the youth. Random

nametags? **Robyn** - In theory the Keynote and Judy Lecturers are intergenerational in their topics and presentation. (We do tell the speakers that in advance.)

Graham - at GA they had a program called World Café. The UUA trustees sat down at different tables, and three youth sat down at each for pizza and conversation around a series of questions to ask of the trustees. It was a great linkage activity. If we can publicize that as an event for youth.

Maria - Overall, would like to see everyone that goes to the conference be a *participant* rather than a *recipient*. Whether it is an open call or entertainment or the ways that people participate. I don't come to conferences to be talked to. In the song writing workshop, I came to write, not to be talked to. Always disappointed when I got to a workshop and it ends up being a lecture.

Joanne - Important to use all of the senses. People learn and interact in different ways. Finding ways to develop a presentation that engages people in different ways. Find ways to engage people in various methods. Davenport - broke up the whole room into areas and did craft activities, had to interact with people in small groups that we didn't know. Giving back to the whole from each group. It engaged you in different ways.

Mike - We could say we want all of our workshops to include some one-on-one interaction, some small group discussion, include a giveaway with the information, and a larger group discussion. If we could envision this as ways of coming together, it would be easy to focus on the content.

Joanne - one of our UUA goals is connectedness. It is such a core principal.

Mike - I would like to see us frontload the effort towards regionalization. We could be proactive in terms of bringing congregations that haven't been together before. In terms of finding a way for people to interact together that wasn't structured, designate a place, name it, and make it intentional, like a the "Chalice Chat Room." Building the opportunity and space for community.

Roger - Ditto of Dittos.

Sarah Greene will invite other regions to our Annual Conference.

Robin will contact Stefan Jonasson and ask for the topic of his talk to post on the website.

WINTER MEETING DATE:

Mark your calendars for **Saturday, January 12.**

District has the ability to put together a teleconference, etc. Sarah is a pro at using those tools. We will talk during October meeting about how to set up the winter conference call.

2:30 p.m. Drive across town to tour the conference hotel:

Marriott Hotel
1200 Collins Road NE
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Reflections on the hotel:

The committee visited the hotel site, which was not crawling with Shriners as expected, but full of wedding guests! We found the space to be attractive, sunny, and well-disposed for the conference. We were able to see the two largest rooms, the Cedar Rapids (holds 150 theatre-style) and the Rosewood (holds 250), and peek into the Grand Ballroom. The current configuration probably allows for 6 workshop spaces at any one time—possibly 7, if the Rosewood Room was used for workshops and the Waterfall Terrace was used for Exhibits. We also discussed the possibility of putting exhibits in the back of the ballroom, if that space wasn't needed for buffets. The advantage of the Waterfall terrace location would be the centrality and the natural light; the disadvantage would be that the exhibits couldn't be locked up at night.

In Gratitude

Thank you to Robyn and Tom for hosting, and to Robyn for the tour! We are excited about the next conference, and feel good that it is in such capable hands! Thanks to Ben for the excellent minutes and all of the weblinks! And thanks to everyone for the fabulous potluck food. Yum!

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Taylor, Chair
Program Planning Committee
PSD Annual Conference

FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

FALL MEETING: Saturday, Oct. 13th ~ 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
UU Fellowship of Ames, Ames, IA

WINTER MEETING: Saturday, January 12 ~ 10a.m.-12:00 p.m. and 1 p.m.-3 p.m.?
Teleconference call

PSD Conference: 9 p.m. Friday night check-in, April 5th, 2013
11 a.m. Sunday to debrief, April 7th, 2013

SPRING MEETING: DATE TBD
Ames, IA

SUMMER MEETING: DATE TBD
Location: Topeka, KS?