

Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council (UUPCC)
Annual Meeting Minutes
Saturday, June 25, 2011

The 2011 Annual Meeting of the UUPCC was held at the Hilton Hotel during the UUA General Assembly in Charlotte, NC.

Before the meeting began Julie Steinbach distributed necklaces with a spiral wire and marble to all attendees. She explained that previously she had given them to their Partner Church Partners and members of her church. Now, she is giving them to Partner Church Council (PCC) members in the United States. She explained the meaning of the design of the necklaces.

Board Chair Richard Van Duizend called the meeting to order at 1:11 PM.

Introductions

Van Duizend introduced the PCC visitors from other counties.

Rev. Derrick Pariat and wife Dani Pyrbot from the Unitarian Union of Northeast India

Rev. Levente Lázár, 2011 Balázs Scholar his wife, Rev. Erika Demeter

Rev. Sándor Jenei, minister of Szabéd, and his wife Tünde, partnered with the

Charlotte UU Church.

Rev. Barna Varró, minister in Rava, and his wife Ilona

Rev. Petr Samojsky of the Unitarian church in Prague

Rev. Mark Kiyimba, Unitarian Universalist Church of Kampala Uganda.

Cornish Award Presentation

The chair invited the Rev. Harold Babcock, Chair of the Cornish Award Selection Committee and UUA Ambassador to the Transylvanian Unitarian Church, to present the Louis C. Cornish Living the Mission Award. Rev. Babcock asked the Rev. Gretchen Thomas to come the podium. Babcock read the inscription on the award about her outstanding contributions to the partnership movement and her book *Walking in Other's Shoes: Stories from the Early Years of the Partner Church Movement*.

Rev. Thomas spoke about what she has learned from Partner Church work. How crossing borders helps up build relationships more in tune with our lives and to create a more mainstream movement. She reminded us that you do not have to think or act alike to love each other very much, it is never too late to be what you are becoming, and we need one another because together we can do what we could never do alone. Among UUs around the world, Americans are most conservative. We find it hard to let our partnership relationships change us. Partnership stretches us in ways we never imagined. Justice is at work among us. It's never too late to be what we are becoming. It took San Jose and Homorodszentmarton churches 16 years to solidify their partnership. She thanked the members for the work that they do.

Stewards of Partnership Awards

Executive Director Cathy Cordes explained these awards are for the people who do the work day in day out to keep partnerships alive in congregations. Four of them were present to accept the reward.

Roger Corn from East Shore Unitarian Church in Bellevue, WA

Fran Corn from East Shore Unitarian Church in Bellevue, WA
Carol Cook from the UUs of San Mateo, San Mateo, CA
Julie Steinbach introduced Catherine Siennes who accepted for Jackie Albay Yenney of the Monte Vista UU Congregation, who is in the Philippines.

Cordes announced the names of the Stewards Awards winners who were not able to attend:

Joe Brisben, UU Fellowship of Ames, IA
Richard Daugherty, First Parish in Bedford, MA
Lori Fox, UUs of San Mateo, CA
Flora Majumder, Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence, MA
Sharon McDonald, First Parish in Bedford, MA
Barbara Owen, First Religious Society, Newburyport, MA
Mary Pugh, UU Church of Berkeley, Kensington, CA
Marta Zsemberovszky, UU Church of Jacksonville, FL

Cordes thanked the Supporting Congregations that are listed in the Annual Report. She described the new congregational partnerships and the small group and individual partnerships for student partnerships that are also listed in the Annual Report.

Van Duizend recognized and thanked the Volunteer Staff:

Nancy Daugherty
Lisa Gillispie
Richard Ford, Eileen Higgins and Sharon Van Duizend
Pat Rodgers
Lee Boeke Burke
Dee Idnani and Cathy Perry
The Communications Committee: Linda Lu Burciaga, Barbara Weber, Scott Prinster, Rodger Mattlage, Cathy Perry, Carol Cook, Julie Gerrard, plus Pat, Nancy and Lisa.

Board Chair's Report

Van Duizend recognized other members of PCC Board, Roger Bertschausen, Vice Chair Rev. Vail Weller, Treasurer George Davenport, Secretary Beverly Moore, deForest Ralph, Scott Prinster, and Ann Gary. He recognized former presidents and chairs who were present: Rev. David Keyes, Rev. Harold Babcock, and Barbara Kres Beach.

Van Duizend highlighted the the UUPCC goals for the current yearChair's Report:

Retaining and revitalizing current institutional partnerships.
Growing the number of individual and congregational partnerships
Increasing the number of individual and institutional members of the UUPCC
Addressing key governance, administrative, and policy issues

Van Duizend briefly listed the strategies for achieving these goals that are described more fully in the Annual Meeting packet and current newsletter. He also cited highlights of the 20th Anniversary of the Partnership celebration in Koloszvár last July, and the training of local community capacity facilitators in The Philippines and the Khasi Hills.

Minutes

Marion Connell (M), Barbara Beach (S).

Voted: Approval of minutes of the 2010 Annual Meeting approved as presented.

Election of Board and Nominating Committee Members

Rev. Vail Weller presented the slate of board members from the Nominating Committee:

Rev. Roger Bertschausen

George Davenport

Cathy Perry

Richard Van Duizend

The nominee for the Nominating Committee is Barbara Pescan.

Gretchen Thomas (M). Roger Corn (S)

Voted: to elect the slate for Board and Nominating Committee as presented.

Treasurer's Report

George Davenport gave the financial report. The treasurer's report is in the Annual Meeting packet. Davenport pointed out the format and explained restricted and unrestricted funds.

Bylaws Amendments

Van Duizend explained the reasons for the proposed changes to the bylaws.

deForest Ralph (M), Lynn Capehart (S)

Voted: to adopt the proposed changes to sections 4.1 and 4.6.

Travel Committee Report

Travel Committee Chair Ann Gary explained the Travel Committee report, which is in the Annual Report Packet. The top priority was to refine and align the travel program to improve our pilgrimage services and to serve partnership building. Last year 70% were traveling for the first time.

Gary reviewed the services provided run by John Dale and Csilla Kolcsar.

Gary requested that people contact her if they have any questions.

The Travel Committee has done surveys of the returning travelers and the Partner Church ministers. The ministers' responses to surveys were very positive. Gary read quotes from both a host and a pilgrim.

Van Duizend reiterated, "Wherever your partner, please travel there."

Margot Fleishman, Office Administrator, pointed out the marketing materials and asked people to take them back to their churches.

Title Consideration

David Keyes (M), Walter Knight (S)

Resolved, the members of the UU Partner Church Council, in recognition of her instrumental role in creating and sustaining the partner church movement, hereby names Dr. Judit Gellérd Honorary President. It is understood that the Honorary President is not involved in the organization's daily operations and does not necessarily speak on behalf of

the UUPCC.

Rev. Keyes stated that he regrets the contentiousness on the chat. He wants to create stronger partnerships and to end contentiousness. He read the first three paragraphs of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church Bishop's statement on behalf of the consistory in which they expressed their sadness that the honorary position was discontinued, the importance of Rev. Dr. Gellérd, and their wish that the UUPCC Board had found a better solution to one of its organizational problems.

Rev. Roger Bertschausen spoke on behalf of the board in response to the motion. He said the board recognizes, celebrates, and appreciates Dr. Gellérd, considers her a founder of the Partner Church movement, and is entirely indebted to her, which is why the Board awarded her the first Cornish Award. However, the title implies that the honorary president has knowledge and contact with the Board and knows what is going on. We have received communication from Transylvania that indicated confusion. The Honorary President is a position with undefined responsibilities and accountability. There continue to be confusing incidents.

Ruth Gibson presented a friendly amendment based on her experiences with churches where someone who has led continues to function in that role and creates confusion and misunderstandings. She proposed that Dr. Gellérd be given the title of General Secretary Emerita since her earlier position with the Partner Church Council was general secretary to make it clear that she does not hold the responsibilities nor authority of a president. Heather Millar seconded the amendment.

Rev. Earl Holt formerly of Kings Chapel, whose partner is first church in Koloszvár, is friends with the bishop and is sure there is much feeling behind his letter. Holt said the problem with the amendment is that he doesn't see any reasonable way to take away such a title without dishonoring the person involved and doesn't find the arguments against restoring it to be reasonable. He asked if someone could address whether the term has a different meaning in Transylvania than here in the US.

Rev. Levente Lázár explained, "We have totally different view." My former congregation president was president for 12 years. Now, he is President Emeritus and a board member like any other. With that title, he will be a board member until he passes away. He can have opinions. So the title means that he is a member and leader of the board. So, Dr. Gellérd is considered a leader. But I am not the one to express an opinion. I am just a scholar here, but in Transylvania, we see the position like that.

Walter Knight explained that Zizi [Dr. Gellérd] has visited his church and is a power to be reckoned with. We need her and everyone else who is working for the Partner Church. We don't want to offend her and people in Transylvania.

Sam Berliner, First Parish Cambridge Church (MA) said that to him it is an unintentional slap in the face. Any other title doesn't work; stick with the original title that most people understand.

Jean Crichton from the Partner Church in Summit, NJ said she doesn't know Zizi herself, but people in Transylvania will feel very different from now on. We now have Philippines, Khasi Hills, Africa, but Transylvania is still very important although we have new partners. I don't know if we will have more honorary presidents, but it is a new world.

Lisa Gillispie said she feels like a baby in her partner church work compared to those who have spoken here, even though she has participated for 10 years. Zizi is only a legend to her; she never knew

her. Lisa made the point that if the motion passes, while the title will be reinstated, there will still be hurt feelings. She hopes there will be continued dialogue to repair the relationships on both sides. Lisa expressed concern over the previous speaker's statement that partnerships would be diminished by removing the title. She stated that partnerships are deep and committed and that we are all doing this work with love and a deep sense of commitment. For Lisa, it is her soul work. It is hard for her to imagine that partnerships will be affected one way or another. She hopes that this is not the salient issue and wants to get back to the work of partnership which is why we are all really here.

Bertschausen said he is intent on engaging in conversation with Gellérd no matter what the decision is, a conversation on what "relationship" means. The board had no intention of silencing Zizi; every PCC member can speak their truth, but the board wants clarity about who speaks for the council. The title General Secretary would be more commensurate with her previous role, but we would still have concerns because there would be no institutional accountability.

Van Duizend called for a vote on the amendment. It was pointed out that Rev. Gibson had offered the title as a friendly amendment and a friendly amendment must be accepted by the person who made the original motion. When asked, Rev. Keyes said he did not agree to the amendment. He said he would support that title should his motion fail, but the members should debate and vote on the motion to restore the Honorary President title. If that is not passed then Ruth Gibson's idea should be considered. Van Duizend accepted the proposal to vote on the original motion first.

Ron Cordes, emphasizing he was speaking only for himself, said he is not privy to inside information from the board, as neither are many of those attending. He said, if the board is dealing with personnel issues that the board cannot discuss, "you must consider that the board may have information that you and I do not have." He asked that the members trust the men and women, the ministers and the lay people, on the board and trust them. He said, "If this passes, this is a vote of no confidence in this board, so trust their deliberations and vote 'no.'"

David Keyes explained that if anything he said was interpreted as a threat, it was not his intention. It is his desire to move on by restoring the title. It is not intended as a threat. In his service on PCC Board, they took many stands that were later changed.

Van Duizend called for the vote on the original motion:

Resolved, the members of the UU Partner Church Council, in recognition of her instrumental role in creating and sustaining the partner church movement, hereby name Dr. Judit Gellérd Honorary President. It is understood that the Honorary President is not involved in the organization's daily operations, and does not necessarily speak on behalf of the UUPCC.

Voted: In favor = 13, against = 15, abstentions = 9.

The motion failed.

Commemoration

Sam Berliner asked for a moment to commemorate the loss of a dear friend and fine older minister who served three congregations at various times. Rev. Kovacs Sandor died suddenly of a brain tumor. Berliner asked for a moment of silence to join him in thinking of what it means to these congregations to lose their pastor like that.

Title Consideration

Ruth Gibson (M), Tom Wintle (S)

That Judit Gellérd be given the title of General Secretary Emerita in recognition of her contributions.

Rev. Scott Prinster shared that although he appreciates Ruth Gibson's interest in making sure that Zizi understands our appreciation, that title has the same problem. This position is still one without explicit accountability. He believes it makes us less effective to have a title with no accountability to the organization.

Knight asked if we are making the decision based on what is best for the board or best for the Partner Church in Transylvania. If we are making the point that we have no faith in the existing board, let us do it that way.

Denise Benshoof said she appreciates that this is the board's work and that someone is doing the work, and that there is someone who wants to find a middle path. She asked if there is a way to ask the board to create a position that will have a better effect. Others chimed in that we need a sense of the meeting and leave it to the Board.

deForest Ralph explained that he was the one who moved the title be discontinued at the UUPCC Board meeting in February. He has had extensive communication with Zizi since then. They know each other's feelings. The primary reason he moved it was so that she could speak freely, criticize the board, tell the board where it is going wrong without the title because any title connotes some authority. With the title, she should communicate with the board before going public or create problems. She chose the public forum of the 20th Anniversary celebration of the UUPCC in Koloszvár to criticize the travel program and the board. Some were good criticisms, but it might have been helpful if she had first given them to the board; and, if the board ignored her, then gone public, it would be understandable. The board received a communication from the TUC Consistory that they wanted to talk to the board about the issues brought up by the Honorary President. That indicated they saw her to be an authority of the PPC. David Keyes quoted some sections of the letter from the consistory earlier. The letter explained that the consistory wrote in response to Zizi's request.

Ralph read a paragraph from the letter.

Finally, the executive committee considers some of the issues raised by Dr. Gellérd, occasionally in her capacity of the honorary president, for instance the ones related to the travel service, as important ones for the interests of the international partnerships of our congregations. Therefore, we look forward to having a dialogue with you about these issues before too long.

Ralph continued that any type of title that implies any authority will continue the confusion. He has great affection for her and his communication was to comfort her but does not mean he would be in favor for her to continue to follow a path that is destructive to her and her effectiveness. Her effectiveness is reduced by having a title. Without one, she can be free to speak. But with the title, she spoke, and "we could do little as we had no written information from her and had to deal with the confusion."

Ralph explained that "General Secretary Emerita" has been proposed; but in the European context, the general secretary is the person who runs the thing. Stalin's title was General Secretary of his

party. She spends more time than we do in Transylvania and knows it very well, which could be helpful to the Board and Transylvanians, but she has not been in direct contact with the board.

Julie Steinbach offered that in the context of organization, there is the concept of covenant between minister and congregation. A covenant is important for clarity of roles.

Marion Connell moved to call the question. The motion passed, and the vote was called on whether **to bestow the title of General Secretary Emerita on Dr. Judit Gellérd.**

**Voted: In favor of bestowing the title = 2; Opposed = 23; Abstaining = 4;
The motion failed.**

Denise Benshoof asked if there is a way to send this message back to the board. Van Duizend responded, "The board has heard and understands the strong feelings in the membership, and it is our responsibility to look for another path."

Rev. Petr Samojsky offered a benediction including these thoughts: Before he came to the meeting, he understood there would be fun and it would be work. There was fun, food and conversation. Now after the meeting, he sees it was fun and it was work, and it is necessary to have fun and necessary to have work. The spirit of fun and work guide us in our relationship[s].

deForest Ralph (M), Barbara Beach (S)

Voted: To adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 PM.

Beverly Derington Moore, Secretary

Approved at the UUPCC Annual Meeting June 22, 2012/bdm