

## Delegate Service and PUUC

Submitted by Steve James

Understanding the relationship between congregations and the UUA is important in deciding whether to serve your congregation as a GA delegate. Since the relationship is so casual some folks may wonder, "Why bother, all we have to do to remain a congregation in good standing is send in our annual report and hold services regularly." While technically true, my experience of being a delegate for a couple of churches at several GAs has been that coming together for a few days, even virtually, provides a rare opportunity for a valuable exchange of ideas, experiences, and perspectives.

GA is a buffet and potluck the Association offers congregations. There are formal UUA proceedings and services, but most of the offerings are brought by congregations. They share what's worked for them on an incredibly wide range of issues. There are many lessons to be learned, and, being UUs we tend to share those achievements with the heartfelt stories of struggling with failures to find success. Repeatedly I have been reminded, that we are not alone. That feeling of connecting with the larger struggle, with the success of other UUs, and a sense of being served by the UUA gives me the quiet of canoeing with many others and GA is a gentle stretch of river where community travels in peace. At least most of the time.

At most GAs there's an issue or two raised that cause controversy. While in the processing of those explorations, exchanges, and decisions tempers rise, feelings get hurt, and regrets are created. But they are also one of the best opportunities to see our values in practice. We not only learn more about our values and how they are perceived by others, but we learn about ourselves.

In an earlier reflection, I shared that in listening to the youngest present at GA I learned about the evolution of our language. That exposed my own biases about language change, political change, and the ways that younger generations have grown up in a collective community, facilitated by

technology, to rely on each other for support, which I learned to provide more for myself. I saw them making complicated and cogent arguments in their dialect. I witnessed their resilience emerge from their connectivity.

So, if you want to feel connected to other UUs, learn something about how others deal with issues facing us, enjoy big issue presentations, get scrappy about our values, and maybe learn something about yourself, please consider attending GA.