

Thank you for allowing me to be one of First Parish's delegates. It was a wonderful first-GA experience for me.

I really appreciated the new GA app and am still checking in on it, delighted to see many others are using it still as a way of staying connected to each other and to the GA "high" we all experienced.

Watching Lois rappel was incredible!! Celebrating her 70th birthday the night before and then seeing this act of courage was something I will treasure always. May we all strive to be as brave as Lois is, in that moment scaling down the wall, and in our UU life overall.

On Saturday and Sunday I had my 7-year-old son with me. So my original focus took a turn towards attending workshops that I otherwise may not have. And what a blessing that was. The first 3-days were great, but seeing GA (and Waterfire) through a child's eyes was remarkable. I appreciate how welcomed he was in each meeting, service and workshop we participated in.

I had many moments of feeling immense gratitude for being UU. One such moment occurred when my son said it was time for us to go to the "men's room." Every time before this he acquiesced to my direction and we went to the "women's rest room." This time he took a stand. And I, in very much need of *going*, decided delaying would not behoove either of us, plus he was right. And so I entered the men's room with him. Confronted with my own uncomfortableness, entering and leaving the men's room, I explained to each man I met the situation of being a single-mom with a son. And each time was given the same response "we are all UUs, there is no need to explain." What a welcoming and comforting message.

A highlight of GA for both Orion and I was Saturday night. We arrived early for Worship services as we were excited to see Sanctuary Boston. I had participated in two transformational workshops with Rev. Thandeka and David Ruffin, and already knowing Matt Meyer - I knew we were going to enjoy the evening's service a lot with music and dancing. One of the organizers approached us, recognizing me from the workshops and seeing Orion's enthusiasm to be front and center, she invited us to sit on stage to be part of the intergenerational service. We had so much fun! I would encourage groups from First Parish to attend Sanctuary Boston's services, as well as to create regular vespers-service: Sanctuary Concord! This form of worship is not only exhilarating, it is expansive and can include so many rhythms and types of music mingled with words. Playful. Peaceful. Exuberant. Somber. Wholly satisfying worship.

There was a much repeated conversation around "language" and "welcoming." Rev Thandeka and David Ruffin demonstrated this in one of the workshops by showing how many of us cringe when we hear the name "Jesus" or reference to "God" and "Lord." A few years ago I certainly would have been one of those who cringed too, but the past couple of years have noticed with relief that I welcome biblical references in ways that I would not have pre-my-UUism. Why? Because it is one of the places we draw our faith and as such there should be room for it. At least that's my two blonde sense on the

matter. The message was echoed at the Sunday morning service by Rev. Mark Stringer. And also present Friday night in words from Rev. Rebekah Montgomery in her sermon entitled: "Walking with the Other." I believe this is the first time a UU military chaplain was welcomed to give a sermon at GA.

I encourage workshops, covenant groups and sermons on expanding our comfort zones to include spiritual language that embraces all the pillars of our faith - and also inclusion of such themes in The Sunday Forum.

I voted for CSAI #3 "escalating inequality." I was disappointed in the series of 2-minute presentations for this CSAI, and was almost swayed to a couple of the others by the heartfelt and logical presentations of those who represented them. But in the end, I feel that all of the other proposed CSAI's can easily be umbrellaed under this so I voted for it. What was not clearly stated by the representatives in their presentations of CSAI #3 was the key point that captured my attention initially in the first paragraph outlining the Escalating Inequality in the GA Program: "**Commitment to the Common Good.**" When Commitment to the Common Good is the central focus, the ripple of positive effects is enormous. And it solves every problem we face today, including all the other proposed CSAIs.

The second paragraph of the proposal reminds that as UUs we are guided by "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations." (also sustainable well-being for Earth and all her inhabitants).

With justice, equity, compassion and sustainability as tenets to guide us, we organically will:

- make room in our judicial systems for truth to be the prevailing outcome denominator
- heal domestic violence in all its forms
- no longer wage war over fossil fuels and religion
- turn needed attention towards healthcare for all, including addressing mental illness in meaningful (non-shaming) ways
- fair economic distribution of goods and services
- responsible consumerism
- upholding civil liberties
- empowering everyone of every age and ability
- etc etc etc

When people from all walks of life have access to a joyful existence, they are more likely to, in turn, contribute to the betterment of society.

As with any movement, we (individuals and congregations) are responsible for mobilizing CSAI #3. I hope that First Parish members wish to play a role in this. I suggest strongly that we invite other local congregations to join us. Host a meeting at First Parish, inviting Sudbury, Carlisle, Lexington, Bedford, Arlington, Harvard, etc etc. And see what interest there is to form a collective cluster group around this cause.

I encourage The Sunday Forum to invite speakers like Charles Eisenstein, author of Sacred Economics to present his findings on what a new economy rooted in the Common Good could look like.

Above all, I encourage in this, and in all study actions, to focus more on what you want to achieve and less on what you want to eliminate. Place the energy and attention on the desired result. And use Jim Key's suggestion to succinctness:

- Who we are.
- What we do.
- Why we do it.

References:

<http://revthandeka.org/>

<http://thesanctuaryboston.org/team/>

<http://www.rhythmrevelations.com/>

<http://sacred-economics.com/>

~ Twinkle

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