



**Rooted, Inspired, & Ready!**

**Report to First Parish in Concord  
about the UUA General Assembly  
2020**

Submitted by the FPC GA 2020 delegates and  
attendees July 14, 2020

To the ministers, staff, and fellow members and friends of First Parish in Concord:

This past June 24<sup>th</sup> through the 28<sup>th</sup>, the Unitarian Universalist Association held its annual General Assembly. This year's conference was entirely virtual. First Parish Concord "sent" 13 delegates, with an additional three members attending. Some First Parish staff also attended. We were joined by over 4,900 other UUs from around the country (and some outside the country). We attended a variety of workshops as well as all-conference author talks, denomination-wide business meetings, and UU worship services. We also heard reports from some important UUA commissions. We came away inspired and energized, excited to share with you fresh ideas on how we can continue to build community at First Parish while we do more of the important work that our denomination is calling us to do.

## **UUA President's Message**

This year, UUA president Susan Frederick-Gray gave an impassioned address in which [she called all of us](#) “to be all-in for systemic change that puts people first and that sees the disease of racism, xenophobia, poverty, ableism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, voter suppression, and climate destruction as one intertwined issue, a disease that we must all organize against together.” She identified the *UU the Vote* campaign as “our critical priority right now.” First Parish has its own UU the Vote effort that everyone can get involved in. Please visit the [FPC website](#) find out more. Our partnership with the UUA is collaborative, providing action items, resources, and a national perspective about the high stakes of the upcoming election.

## **Commission Recommends Broad Changes in UUA Culture**

Another important address came from the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change (COIC). Established 3 years ago, the COIC was formed to support “long-term cultural and institutional change that redeems the essential promise and ideals of Unitarian Universalism.” The commission conducted an audit of the UUA's power structures and analyzed “systemic racism and white supremacy culture within the Unitarian Universalist Association.” The resulting [report](#) a candid, thoughtful document that provides recommendations for changes within the UUA so that our denomination can live up to its principles and ideals in their fullest sense.

While many of the recommendations are targeted more toward the UUA than to individual congregations, there is much in the report that we feel our church can take away and use. As the report states, we need to acknowledge “anti-oppression work as a theological mandate” for ourselves. Over the coming months, we plan to share elements of the commission's hopeful report with the full congregation, anticipating the prospect of working together to identify where our continued work lies at First Parish.

## **Workshops Address Anti-Oppression Efforts and Beloved Community**

The many workshops we attended at GA offered ground-level guidance for congregations looking to take on the anti-oppression work that our denomination is calling us to do. While GA has focused on anti-racism work for years, this year's conversations had a new urgency and candor to them, energized by the protests triggered by the killing of George Floyd. We heard our denomination calling on us to do more of the work we have already begun—the messy, humbling work of educating ourselves further on anti-oppression work, challenging our own beliefs and unconscious biases, raising our awareness in new ways, and changing our own practices. This work has begun in our congregation in a number of ways, including two teach-in Sundays; other Sunday services focused on the subject; the active Racial Justice Action Group; the Beloved Conversations program; and the Transgender

Inclusion in Congregations course, to name a few. We believe we are called to continue and include efforts in:

- “De-centering” white culture and learning to listen to—and appreciate—the stories and histories of Black and Indigenous peoples, as well as all other People of Color
- Building beloved community. Beloved community happens when people of diverse racial, ethnic, educational, class, gender, and sexual orientation backgrounds and identities come together in an interdependent relationship of love, mutual respect, and care that seeks to realize justice within the community and the broader world.
- Learning to be a place of radical welcome, where we eliminate barriers to embracing the full participation of people who are marginalized because of their skin color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic and social status, or abilities
- Learning more about truth & reconciliation efforts and the concept of reparations as ways to acknowledge and redress centuries of oppression by white supremacy culture. (We understand that the word "reparations" is troublesome or even charged for some. We think it is still important to explore this concept in all its breadth and the creativity that some are bringing to it.)
- Evaluating our church’s own practices to see where white privilege is built-in and working to change that

As we share more with you from General Assembly in the coming months, we hope you will be inspired to help UU the Vote; to join us in the anti-oppression work of recognizing our white privilege and the culture it creates at First Parish; and to continue to find ways to build beloved community in our midst.

Respectfully submitted by your First Parish in Concord GA 2020 delegates and attendees,

Lillian Anderson  
Jane Barnes  
Mary Ann Barton  
Laurén Evans  
Holli Jones-White  
Marilyn Lowitt

Peter Lowitt  
Peter Nobile  
Jan Power  
Liz Rust  
Susan See

Jim Sherblom  
Darien Smith  
Hank Sorett  
Lois Suarez  
Fred Van Deusen

## Related Links:

Excerpt from UUA president Susan Frederick-Gray's address to the 2020 General Assembly: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyHsjmx2RzY&feature=youtu.be>

Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray's complete President's Report to the 2020 General Assembly; video: <https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/2020/business/general-session-2/presidents-report>

First Parish in Concord *UU the Vote* webpage: <https://firstparish.org/wp/justice/uu-the-vote-at-first-parish-in-concord/>

*Widening the Circle of Concern: Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change*, June 2020; downloadable pdf: <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening>

*Widening the Circle of Concern: Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change*, June 2020; print copy, available at UUA Bookstore for \$16.00: <https://www.uuabookstore.org/Widening-the-Circle-of-Concern-P18686.aspx>