

# **UURMaPA CONFERENCE PLANNING GUIDELINES**

**Attend any conference, regardless of where you live!**

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST RETIRED MINISTERS and PARTNERS

April 2015

The UURMaPA Board thanks you for being involved in planning a local or regional conference. We hope these guidelines will be helpful, easing the planning and resulting in a more organized, inspirational, and overall successful conference. Here is contact information for the two UURMaPA Board members with whom you will wish to be in contact:

## **AREA CONFERENCES**

Conferences may be scheduled anywhere and anytime. They may be multi-day meetings or one day gatherings. Their object is to bring people together. Any member is welcome at any conference.

## **BOARD CONTACTS**

Two UURMaPA Board members will be useful to you: the member carrying the Conferences portfolio and the Treasurer. Find them both on the Board of Directors page.

## **HOW TO BEGIN**

Create a planning team and allocate the essential areas of responsibility. In many cases one or two persons can perform all the roles):

*Program and worship*—plan the program, secure appropriate talent, recruit worship leaders and Odyssey presenter

*Hospitality*—purchase, have delivered, and serve social hour refreshments, such as snacks, soft drinks, beer, and wine, and m&ms for availability during the program sessions. (Note: one or two chaplains might be named, to deal with sudden concerns.)

*Publicity and Administration*—includes the Registrar (to publicize the conference, create the registration form, sign up the folks, collect the checks, prepare the conference packet) and the Arrangements Person (to help the folks arrive on time, eat the right stuff at the right time, sleep in the right beds, complete and evaluation and depart on time).

Try to include a partner on the team, and at least one member with experience from a previous conference. Emails and conference calls can facilitate committee business. Ask the Board liaison for information about setting up conference calls.

## **SELECT A SITE**

Work with one or more conference centers or a local UU church to arrange for the date and site.

## **CONFERENCE FINANCES**

Determine the registration fee sufficient to cover the costs of meals (for one-day meetings) or (for overnight or longer conferences) room and board, hospitality, and program, including possible expenses for speakers: honorarium, travel, and meals or room and board. All conferences are expected to be self-supporting. That said, conference organizers are encouraged to apply to the UURMaPA Board for program grants through the Board liaison. Too, advances to temporarily cover conference expenses may be requested from the UURMaPA treasurer.

## **CONFERENCE BOOKKEEPING**

The registrar should forward registration checks as they are received to the UURMaPA treasurer for deposit well before the conference. Receipts for copying and mailing, etc. will be paid promptly after being received by the UURMaPA treasurer. Conference organizers will have their room, Board and registration covered by UURMaPA.

## **PARTICIPANT FINANCES**

UURMaPA members, both clergy and partners, may request financial assistance in order to attend. Direct such requests to the UURMaPA treasurer. State the amount of assistance that you need, including costs for travel, caregiver for a dependent partner, etc. in addition to the registration fee.

## **PUBLICITY**

Let your conference be known! The following media are at your service:

*Elderberries*, our quarterly newsletter, Judith Welles, ed. ([jcwelles@gmail.com](mailto:jcwelles@gmail.com)). Deadlines are the 15th of January, April, July and October, for publication on the first of the next month. Furnish Judith with complete, concise information. Allow for announcements in at least two consecutive issues. A registration form may be included in the final conference announcement.

*UURMaPA-Announce*, our one-way, Board-to-members, e-mail source, Judith Gibson, source ([judygibson@bellsouth.net](mailto:judygibson@bellsouth.net)) Furnish Judith with an e-mail-ready message.

*The UURMaPA Website* <http://www.uurmapa.org> Ask the Board liaison how to get information placed on the website.

*The UURMaPA Directory*. Target all members in your vicinity by making use of the comprehensive list by Caring Area in the back. Request mailing labels and/or email lists from our database keeper, Marcia Olsen ([membership@gmail.com](mailto:membership@gmail.com)). Our most recent retirees are listed in each issue of *Elderberries*.

## **REGISTRATION FORM**

Include the following:

1. Dates, times, location, and topic or theme (if there is one).
2. The total registration fee, plus—
  - The initial deposit to be included with the returned registration form
  - The due date of the balance
  - Cancellation policy: The Board recommends no penalty for cancellation. Some of our members have scant resources.
  - To whom the check is to be written and where it is to be sent.
3. Encouragement to members with limited resources—retired ministers and partners both--to apply for assistance with conference expenses to UURMaPA treasurer Joel Weaver. Mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address for the registrar and the organizer.
4. Request for mail preference for further information: e-mail or snail mail.
5. Directions to the site from a nearby interstate highway, plus a map. (Many drivers will simply key the terminal address into their GPS anyhow.)
6. Site information for family use in an emergency: mail and email addresses and phone number.

Supplementary communications, such as reminders, program details, and new information may be sent to registrants closer to the conference date.

## **NOTIFICATION OF LOCAL MINISTERS**

If a conference is held at a UU congregation, its minister(s) must be notified as arrangements are being made. It is gracious to invite the minister to bring greetings to the conference. Local ministers can be helpful with information about the community, possible programs available, or individuals who can contribute to the richness of the conference.

## **UPON ARRIVAL**

(For special notes on one-day conferences, see below)

Be sure to have a designated greeter or two, and furnish each new arrival with an information packet including a name tag, his/her room number and a map of the facility, a schedule, a roster of participants, helpful information about the local area, and an evaluation form to be completed before participants depart. Include the address and phone number of the nearby hospital, the location of a 24-hr. phone in the facility, and the reminder to dial 911 in the case of a medical or security emergency.

## **PROGRAM**

A program pattern has developed over the years. Some elements include:

1. personal sharing the first evening;
2. regular worship services, one of which should include “In Memoriam,” a reading of the names of members (including partners) who died during the preceding year;
3. news from the UURMaPA Board;

4. the major program;
5. an Odyssey\*, from an individual clergy or partner, or a couple
6. a field trip to a local museum or nature center;
7. free time for conversation;
8. social time, before dinner. If such time features libations, be sure to include non-alcoholic beverages as well.

\*Suggested guidelines for choosing odyssey presenter(s):

1. Review list of previous presenters at this conference or others
2. Poll local area people to ask who they want to hear
3. Give several suggestions to the Board liaison, who will present suggestions to the Board for review
4. Then invite person to present odyssey at the conference.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

Good wine and good snacks oil the social hour gears. And tablecloths, even if plastic, seem to help those present feel cared for.

The Spring (Attleboro) conference has a long tradition of providing member-authors with space to market their wares. And somehow long-term members always show up with greeting cards for all to sign, wishing absent previous attendees well and conveying condolences,

### **END OF CONFERENCE**

If possible, choose a date and a committee for next year. If returning to the same site, try to make arrangements for the next year's dates before you depart.

Give participants five or ten minutes to complete the evaluation form.

Immediately after the conference, prepare a written report on the conference, including a financial statement. Send the report to Board liaison John Weston as well as to the organizer of the next planning committee.

### **ONE-DAY CONFERENCES/GATHERINGS**

For one day gatherings, one or two persons can often handle the planning and logistical tasks.

A UU church with a pleasant, inexpensive restaurant nearby is often an ideal locale for a one-day events. A conference or retreat center is another possibility.

Registration forms may or may not be needed but you will need to request some form of RSVP (snail mail, e-mail, telephone) from those planning to attend. For some one day gatherings, advance registration fees may be needed (to make sure costs will be covered), thus requiring a registration form.

Simple morning refreshments as folks arrive and lunch and dinner (if the meeting lasts into the evening) will need to be arranged, either brought in or by dining out.

“Fees” for one day conferences need to cover meal/food costs and any cost for the meeting space or special speaker. Scholarship monies are not available for one day gatherings.

“Program” can be very simple with personal sharing, connections and worship or can include a topic, speaker, presentation, etc.