

Senior Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees

December 2019

Since nothing is listed in the reporting schedule for December, I thought I would offer my observations on what is happening in the wider UUA at the present time. The UUA is going through an intense period of change. I think the change comes under three headings:

1. *Organizational.* With the election of Rev. Susan Frederick Gray in 2017 as President of the UUA, the Association has become more "mission" focused. Susan has led the UUA to consider two primary foci, the first is to respond to the needs of the local congregations and the second is to live out our UU values in the larger world. She sees an urgency to this in her oft quoted phrase "this is no time for a casual faith". To this end, the UUA has completed its move towards regionalization, largely reducing the many districts to a smaller number of larger regions. Each region has a specialized staff that responds to specialized needs of congregations and reduces the UUA field staff who have been responsible for particular congregations. I personally think this is a failing; we have no one UUA field staff person who liaisons with us.
2. *Leadership.* With a renewed emphasis on living out our UU values, the UUA has intentionally increased the number of people of color in positions throughout the UUA. Over 35% of the UUA staff are now people of color (up from 14% in 2016) and over 50% of the senior leadership are people of color. This shift has not come without controversy. The resignation of the previous president of the UUA Rev. Peter Morales was largely over the predominant hiring of white people in executive leadership in the UUA. At the outset, this change in leadership is leading to greater diversity.
3. *Shifting from a culture of white supremacy.* The phrase "culture of white supremacy" is the technical definition of our primarily white biased culture which is still predominant in our society. This does not refer to "white supremacists" but rather a culture that presumes that the status quo remains normative, e.g. if "diversity" means hiring more people of color to key positions than why is that we have to intentionally include people of color. It is the position of the UUA and UUMA that all our congregations continue to operate under a culture of white supremacy. This has led to some significant conflict within our Association by those who consider such "dismantling" as a form of dangerous identity politics.

I personally welcome most of the changes within the UUA. I am concerned about regionalization and a lack of accountable relationship with congregations such as ours and the field staff. It took me several attempts to actually meet with the regional lead of the New

England Region, Mr. Woullard Lett. Now that we have met I believe our future relationship will be fruitful. He encourages us to take a leadership role in training our CT congregations around areas such as chaplaincy, worship associates and our COM. I do have some concerns regarding how we are shifting away from a “culture of white privilege” (my preferred term). I think that “calling out” those of us who may have implicit bias without providing education is dangerous. Identity politics is driving our nation apart. My hope is that we can have a more gradual and compassionate education in how racism affects all of us.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Dr. John T. Morehouse