



**REFLECTIONS ON
GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2010
REV. TIM TEMERSON
Sunday, August 1, 2010**

First I want to thank everyone from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron who represented our congregation at General Assembly in Minneapolis. This was the first General Assembly I have attended as the minister of a congregation and I must say the experience was amazing. Of course, I loved this GA for the same reasons that always make GA special – the beautiful and inspiring worship services, the workshops that offer so much insight and information about how we can enrich our lives and our congregations, and most importantly the sheer power of being in the same place with so many Unitarian Universalists. Whenever I attend GA, I know that although our religion is small compared to others,

we have so much energy, so much commitment, and so much love in our congregations that we can truly change the world.

But unlike previous GA's, this one was even more meaningful because I was there with the congregation I am so proud and honored to serve. And I must say that our congregation made quite a splash at General Assembly. I can't tell you how many people congratulated me on being the minister of that church that brought so many people, so much energy, and so many cool red T-Shirts to GA. Of course, I couldn't help but take the opportunity to do some major bragging about our congregation, about how our incredible youth had worked so hard by selling gallons upon gallons of soup on Sunday mornings to raise the money to come to GA, about how our congregation grew by more than 10%

in membership over the last year, and about how there is a palpable energy and excitement in the air that is leading our church in new and exciting directions. I have never been so proud and done so much bragging at GA and I must say that I loved every minute of it!

But I also noticed something else about this General Assembly, something that felt very different – something I experienced over and over again. I experienced it at the rally so many of us attended for marriage equality and I experienced it in the many conversations and debates about immigration. If I was to sum up the essence of GA in Minneapolis, I would simply say that this General Assembly was all about love. Time and again I could hear the same question circling through the convention center. “Are we as a people of faith and as a nation going to live our lives from a place of love, compassion, and inclusion,

or are we going to live from a place of fear, suspicion, and exclusion?

And there was something else about the love I experienced in Minneapolis. It wasn't a soft or sentimental love that simply leads us to feel good about ourselves. No. This is a powerful, active, and demanding love – a love that is calling us to stand up for the dignity and worth of all people - a love that is calling our congregations to be communities of radical hospitality and welcome, communities that care not only about those who are like us, but that also care about those who are so often ignored, reviled, and rejected. More than anything else, General Assembly in Minneapolis was a call to affirm love, a call to stand on the side of love, and a call to follow where love leads in my own life and in the life of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron.

And that's both the question and the challenge I bring to you from General Assembly. Where is that strong, demanding love - a love that knows no bounds and no distinctions - where is that love calling this congregation? How will we live that love both within and beyond the walls of this sanctuary?

As we move forward this year and begin to live the bold, new mission we adopted last Spring, may we be guided, challenged, and inspired to always, always, always, stand on the side of love and follow where love leads.

Thank you for listening. It's great to be back with you and Blessed Be.

REFLECTION GA 2010 CHARLIE NELSON

GA offers an opportunity for any of us to be part of our larger UU community; the opportunity to discover what it means to be a UU; the opportunity to discover who we are and what we can be as our UU congregation.

GA in Minneapolis this year did this for me, again.

We did this with our youth. Thank you to each of you who ate soup and sundaes to give our youth this unparalleled opportunity.

We change at GA. Al Franken, Senator from Minnesota, changed as he stood to address us, a gathering of some 4,000 UUs.

Introduced by our own Meg Ryan, Al Franken got up and said, "I am not going to talk about what I was going to talk about." He then talked, lovingly, about his father, who he was, how he died and what he meant to him, how his father defined God for him.

He was emotional. He thanked us for being UUs, for being a force in the world, for being a spiritual community that matters. He thanked us for our witness for social and economic justice. I am moving to Minnesota so I can vote for him. Go to YouTube and search for "Al Franken talks about God".

What am I bringing back?

It's all about our mission. We have a new minister, a new excitement, , a new desire to do things. We need to keep our mission at the center. If we do this in our behavior and our actions, in worship, in RE, in our fellowship and community, in social and economic justice, in the wider world, then we will matter, as individuals and as a congregation.

Adaptive leadership! What? We are all leaders. We lead when we see weeds and pull them. We lead when we want to take our youth to GA and find a way to do it. We lead when we see an issue and say "we need to do something and I will help". Leading is coming forward before we are asked. Leading is each of us living our faith, actively, to keep our congregation strong and relevant, taking responsibility. Adaptive leadership is about sharing leadership broadly.

Stewardship! Yes, stewardship! If we each, personally, base our stewardship in our mission and our faith, we will be generous. If we give based on our personal faith and spirituality, we will be generous. Ask yourself "If we were creating a new UU congregation, today, what would that congregation be, what would that congregation do?" Answer this question and you will define your faith, your spirituality, and our mission and work as a congregation.

I am so proud to be a UU and a member of this congregation. Thank You

Elizabeth Nelson

GA Sunday – August 1, 2010

Good morning!

I come to you much as I came to you last summer, grateful for the experience of having been to GA and still awed and amazed by the whole experience. And, again, with the same wish that all of you could have been with us for the adventure.

We UU's came together to honor our history with special programs on Margaret Fuller and Forrest Church. We joined together at the very meaningful Service of the Living Tradition which, this year, was extra special to us as we were honored to be present as our Rev. Tim was admitted to Preliminary Fellowship in the ministry.

We experienced the many ways we are willing to work together to tackle some of our time's most difficult issues from the wide range of displays in the Exhibition Hall where we could meet and learn from the exhibitors to attending the workshops and the plenaries. Ethical eating, immigration reform, national economic reform ...all of these were discussed. We joined the Standing on the Side of Love rally. We listened thoughtfully as Winona LaDuke, the Native American environmentalist, activist, economist joined the long line of the Ware lecture presenters from Martin Luther King, Jr. to poet Mary Oliver.

It is very easy to be totally overwhelmed by the opportunities presented. This year eight workshop sessions were held on Thursday and Friday. Which workshop to attend? A very good question and not easily answered because for each session there were more than twenty to select from. If you suffer from rampant curiosity as I do, and I suspect that many of you do, you want to attend them all and glean as much as possible from each. And did I mention the Bookstore and the author signings? No? Well, never mind. But you must make a decision to that you can't do it all, go with the flow, learn, appreciate and enjoy!

When over 4,000 UU's gather together for worship, the space is filled with joy and wonder enhanced by the musicians and hearing our own voices singing. Especially beautiful, this year seventy-five 10, 11, 12 year olds came from 25 states to form a Children's Choir. They spent the week with their volunteer chaperones at Macalester College becoming better artists and better scientists as well as musicians. And then they sang for us!

Next year will be very special as we gather for our 50th GA Celebration in Charlotte, North Carolina. Charlotte is only a day's drive...that's just a hint...

Near the end of our very moving Closing Celebration, a number of folks quickly told us why they will be going to Charlotte. There were a myriad of reasons, but the one spoke closest to me was, "I'm going to Charlotte because GA restores my spirit!"

Next summer, Love calls us to Charlotte!

GA Service~ When Life gives you onions, make soup!

Monica Edgerton

Last year Rev. Tim came to one of our first COYA meetings to introduce himself to us, and to present us with the great idea of going to General Assembly. COYA had been talking about a big trip for some time, ever since the trip to Boston several years ago. When a trip to GA was presented to us as a possibility, we immediately said yes! Let's do it! But as president of COYA, I know I, and probably others, were thinking: is this really possible; can we really make a trip to GA happen? We knew we would have to do a lot of fundraising, and would really have to get organized if we were to make something as great as this happen.

So, we hit the ground running, coming up with great fundraising ideas, most notably Souper Sunday and the Concert slash Art Auction. All of this went very well, although it was very trying at times. While I was helping plan the next fundraiser, I was swimming in senior year homework and college applications. There were a few times when I wished money would grow on trees, but I pulled myself together, put nasty homework aside, and had fun chopping piles of onions! (when life gives you onions, make soup!)

We were doing quite well until we started getting close to June. It was the end of senior year for me, and the pressure was on like never before. One day it was announced to me that COYA was short on money and I thought "oh no! why did we ever decide to take on the impossible task of raising thousands of dollars by selling soup once a month? I knew in the beginning this would be too hard to accomplish. Why did I ever waste my time doing it?"

But fortunately, there is always a way to make the seemingly impossible, possible. My mom had just discovered that there was a scholarship that we could apply for to cover the rest of the difference. Soon I, and the other 8 youth and 2 adults were on our way to GA.

At GA, I sat in on a number of workshops, mini assemblies, and even a few plenaries. I loved GA very much, and learned a lot from the whole experience. For me, one thing that stood out the most, was the huge array of seemingly impossible ideas that were swirling around everywhere. Clean up the oil spill. Stop SB 1070. Peace on Earth. Help women Saudi Arabia to go to college. They all seem impossible, and too numerous, but I am sure that just as the youth in this Church were able to make a trip to GA possible, with the help from the whole congregation, all of us in this room can work to make this world a better place, with the help of everyone already working to do so.

You know the old saying, when life gives you lemons, make lemonade? Well, when life gives you onions, make soup! In other words, when a person is presented with an idea or a problem, that person can either sit down and think and cry about it, or, that person can stand up, ask for help, gather ingredients and resources, chop the onion and put the idea into action, let the smell of soup fill the room and tell everyone about it, and finally, serve the soup to all the grateful people whose bellies will be filled by a warm bowl of soup.

From my experiences getting to, and at General Assembly, I have learned that there is always a way to make something possible, and although we may not know what it is right now, I believe it is our job to find that way, together.