

First Unitarian Portland Delegate Reports Summary

General Assembly 2025: Meet the Moment

At General Assembly (GA) 2025 of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), participants engaged in worship, witness, learning, connection, and democratic policymaking. This year's work included a minor bylaw change, resolutions of social action, and the election of Moderator, Trustees and Nominating Committee. The UUA budget was presented and approved. There were 1,882 delegates from 592 congregations (just over half of our congregations), with 3270 total attendees. Workshops and events included the Service of the Living Tradition, Ware Lecture, and Sunday worship. First Unitarian Portland had 11 delegates, including two on-site in Baltimore.

This GA modeled the beloved community in its dedication to inclusivity. Care Teams supported both in-person and online attendees. Sign language interpreters were available for all sessions. Speakers described their appearance to aid those with special needs. Mistakes during sessions were acknowledged and corrected. GA 2025 also marked the American Unitarian Association's 200th anniversary with a wonderful presentation that brought the legacy of William Ellery Channing into clearer focus. Channing's positive redefinition of Unitarianism continues to inspire Unitarian Universalists (UU) to explore our identity, connection to the broader world, and commitment to justice and humanity.

Three Actions of Immediate Witness (AIW) were passed at this GA. An AIW is a statement about a significant action, event, or development in the world expressing the conscience and authority of the delegates at the GA at which it is passed. These social justice declarations can be used by UU congregations when taking positions within and without our faith. The AIWs that were affirmed:

- **We Declare and Affirm: Immigrants Are People Who Have Inherent Worth and Inalienable Rights**) <https://www.uua.org/action/process/2025-proposed-aiw-all-people-have-inherent-worth-and-inalienable-rights> - Recent authoritarian actions in the US (e.g., mass deportations, family separations, erosion of due process) represent moral and democratic failures that demand a response. This AIW asks UUs to commit act, including public witness, developing community partnerships, and legislative engagement.
- **Faithful Defiance of Authoritarianism, a Call to Action: Reaffirming Our Covenants for Democracy and Freedom** <https://www.uua.org/action/process/2025-proposed-aiw-faithful-defiance-authoritarianism> - This AIW affirmed the need for democratic action, recognizing current threats to justice, equity, democratic institutions, and the rule of

law. This AIW asks UUs to uphold civil society (e.g., peaceful/principled resistance, engaging in national/local movements for justice, inclusion, and democracy).

- **Defending LGBTIQ Freedom Amid Funding Crisis: A Call for Global Solidarity** <https://www.uua.org/action/process/2025-proposed-aiw-funding-global-lgbtqi-freedom-amid-crisis> - This AIW asks UUs to organize, advocate, witness and fundraise for, and learn about issues impacting the LGBTIQ (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer community). Examples of actions include contributing to local/global human rights campaigns; integrating justice for local and global LGBTIQ communities into congregational actions; speaking out in writing and through our voices to support the LGBTIQ community; and hosting educational forums on the local/global state of LGBTIQ rights.

GA delegates also voted to choose one of three proposed Congregational Study/Action Issues (CSAI). These were the three CSAIs which were discussed and voted on: *Housing: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*; *Abolition is Faith Formation*; and *Fat Liberation: Building Justice and Inclusion for Larger Bodies*. After three years of study across the denomination, the CSAI process will produce an in-depth UU position on the chosen issue and UUA Statement of Conscience to provide implementation mechanisms. The CSAI selected was **Abolition, Transformation, and Faith Formation** (<https://www.questformeaning.org/wp3/full-csai-proposal/>). The term "abolition" highlights the significance of this CSAI. Abolition is an action that has historically been taken by our faith tradition. Abolition names how punitive systems of oppression (especially the prison-industrial complex) harms people at the intersections of race, class, disability, gender identity, mental health, immigration status, and it allows for building restorative systems that respond to harm with accountability.

Individual Delegate Statements

Curtis Bell – “I like to attend the UUA GA in person because I am on the board of Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East (UUJME.org) and like to help promote our organization among UUs. At this GA, UUJME had two programs on Israeli Treatment of Palestinians and the Apartheid Free Community program (<https://apartheid-free.org/>). The Apartheid Free Community program asks UU communities to sign a pledge opposing Apartheid. I like to attend GA as it provides a unique opportunity to speak with active UUs from around the country and the leaders of the different UU organizations.”

Linda Craig – “I awakened on June 22, 2025, to the news that the US had bombed Iran. I felt a devastating mix of dismay, fear, and anger. Can my church and faith support me at such a painful time? Could the GA Sunday Worship Service possibly respond to this moment with so little warning? I was not disappointed. The Reverend Nicole Kirk led with, “We cannot stop the violence, but we can hold space for the grief.” As I watched speaker after speaker, I was

reassured that our denomination could not only provide a direction for our response but also provide solace.”

Ethel Gullette – “I learned a lot about some issues I had not reflected on very much before, and I was inspired by the research, advocacy, passion and caring that delegates brought to our discussions. I was very interested in the discussions of the three Actions of Immediate Witness and was inspired personally to do more for these causes, and I do hope our congregation will choose to strengthen our witness in these areas of focus.”

Theo Harper – “I attended the opening worship. This was very inspiring. It was a recognition that the work we must do will be hard and we must depend on each other for support. I remember hearing some time ago, a statement regarding planting trees for someone else to reap. This reminded me of that.”

Leslie Pohl-Kosbau – “One of the many celebrations at the 2025 GA, we recognized the formation of the Association through William Ellery Channing’s 90-minute Baltimore sermon, a foundation for organizing Unitarians of “moral character” in 1819 and 1825. A fact that I did not know was that individuals could belong to the Association, but that congregations were first allowed in the AUA in 1884.”

Cathy Tortorici – “During GA discussions, UU was described as **an institution; a faith; and a movement**. After examining these actions and attending GA, I realized that that the work done and the beliefs held as UUs do embody these words – institution, faith, movement. This is a powerful message to bring to First Unitarian Portland for our work.”

Art Ungar – “The UUA bylaws say: “General Assemblies shall make overall policy for carrying out the purposes of the Association and shall direct and control its affairs.” This year we had a minor bylaw change, resolutions of social action, and the election of Moderator, Trustees and Nominating Committee. All but the Moderator were nominated by the Nominating Committee without opposition.”

Jim Whitefish - Being a very new UU I was deeply impressed with the dedication, fairness, and commitment of UUs, especially around the discussion of AIWs and CSAIs. It was inspiring to see so many LGBTQ+ folks not just attending but leading workshops. The new virtual hymnal is a fantastic idea, and I look forward to seeing it in use. I thought the worship services amazing, and the speakers were “the best.”