



## Special Announcement

Unitarian Universalist Association

April 2020

**General Assembly (GA).** I am pleased to share with you this message from LaTonya Richardson, the UUA's General Assembly and Conference Services Director:

General Assembly, the annual conference that gathers thousands of Unitarian Universalists, is a tradition beloved by many. It is a time of celebratory reunion, participatory governance, and leadership development. The UUA Office of General Assembly and Conference Services (GACS), along with a group of dedicated volunteers who form the General Assembly Planning Committee, scout cities, make commitments, and execute contracts years in advance to plan each conference.

In February, GA 2020 planning was off to a remarkable start. Almost 2,000 people registered early and the number of program proposals and guest speakers broke recent records. Then COVID-19 became a national pandemic and a state of emergency was declared. Everyone—including Unitarian Universalists and those of us planning GA—had to quickly assess how to stay socially and spiritually connected despite being physically distant. I am proud of our creativity and flexibility during this time of hard choices and difficult transitions.

As Director of GACS for the UUA, the safety and well-being of all GA participants was my paramount concern as I monitored federal and state regulations, meeting and convention industry predictions, and the status of other faith-based assemblies. The decision of what to do about GA was complex, with a variety of scenarios to consider and much collaboration between the Planning Committee, UUA staff, and UU identity and affiliate groups. A thorough analysis of our contracts was also necessary to determine our legal and financial obligations, and what penalties we would incur should we breach the contracts.

Everyone involved in GA in some way, from presenters to exhibitors to

speakers and staff, were feeling the anxiety that comes with uncertainty. Thankfully, the investment of time and effort on the front end paved the way for us to come to a mutually agreeable resolution with our partners in Providence. Then, the UUA Board passed a resolution authorizing a 100% virtual GA for 2020. The Board's decision alleviated much of the anxiety and gave the UUA's Internet Technology Services team and program presenters time to plan a more robust and rewarding virtual experience.

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A 100% virtual GA comes at a time when many UU congregations have embraced virtual meetings and virtual Sunday services. Although this pandemic has been challenging for many, a silver lining is that UUs are adapting to and seeing the value of incorporating technology into their religious lives. With so many UUs already online, this year's GA could well be our highest-attended Unitarian Universalist gathering in history! It will be accessible to a more diverse and global audience. It will also help reduce our carbon footprint, which aligns with our commitment to care for the earth and environment.

Join us as we experiment in previously unimaginable ways! If you are already registered for GA, your registration has been converted to virtual and you will receive a survey regarding the options for applying your refund. If you have not registered for GA, [please click here to do so now](#).

May we be ROOTED in our revolutionary and living faith tradition, INSPIRED by this opportunity to live our mission in innovative ways, and READY to celebrate in June...virtually!

Yours in love,

Susan

**Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray** spends her days strengthening the thriving mission of this faith. In her spare time, she enjoys being with her family and playing with their dog, Hercules.



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Unitarian Universalist Association, 24 Farnsworth St., Boston MA 02210, United States.