

Summary report of the June 2nd, 2013 meeting of the founders' group of the Unitarian Universalists of Geneva

1. Introduction

On June 2nd, 2013 a group of interested parties met to establish formally the Unitarian Universalists of Geneva (UUG) by drafting and adopting its statutes. This document presents a report of the significant discussion and results of that meeting.

Present were Mike Pejic, Deborah Toppenberg-Pejic, Daryl Newton, Greg Ratta, Greg Wierzynski, and Karin Holm Randall as shown in the photo.



The meeting took place at the home of Deborah and Mike Toppenberg-Pejic, in the canton of Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting started at 11:30am and concluded at 2:30pm.

2. Background

After a brief meditation about what is cherished about Unitarian Universalist fellowships, the progress towards establishing formally the UUG fellowship was remembered by the participants. Oral tradition indicates that a UUG fellowship has been operating informally in Geneva since the mid-1980s. In 2007 steps were initiated by Sandy Price to formalize the entity as a non-profit association; however, this effort was not completed.

In June 2012, Greg Ratta restarted the process. He distributed an initial draft of statutes to create a non-profit association for the purpose of developing a liberal religious community guided by the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism to the active participants on 5 August 2012. A drafting committee, comprising Karin Holm Randall, Greg Ratta and Aneta Wierzynska, reviewed and revised the draft. The committee presented the proposed Statutes to the participants of the informal UUG fellowship and announced the meeting that is the subject of this report, inviting participation. The source material that was used to shape the proposed statutes was made available to the community at this website: 130421_bylaws.htm.

3. Review of proposed text of the statutes

Each article of the proposed statutes was reviewed by the participants. The significant modifications introduced were:

- a) Addition of an item in clause 4.2 to allow the extraordinary termination of membership. This change was motivated by a concern to have the ability to address the, anticipated to be rare, situations of members who act in a manner inconsistent with the principles of the association.
- b) Clause 4.2 was edited to clarify that only “reasonable” efforts to contact individuals were necessary.
- c) Clause 6.2 was edited to clarify that the officer reports are to be made at the annual meetings, not in advance of those meeting.
- d) Clause 6.5 was modified to reduce the requirement for approval of items considered at annual and special meetings from 66% to a simple majority. This modification was introduced because several participants believed that it could be too difficult to achieve a 2/3 majority. Related, but unresolved, discussion also considered the subjects of proxies and of quorum. These two items were relegated to the Steering Committee for consideration in creating the UUG Operations Manual.

4. Approval of the statutes

The Unitarian Universalists of Geneva (UUG) was founded by establishing the statutes of the Unitarian Universalists of Geneva (as an *association sans but lucratif*) which were signed by the founding members after discussion at their meeting on 2 June 2013. The participants agreed unanimously to adopt the Statutes indicated in Annex 1 to this report.

5. Appointment of officers

Officers were appointed by unanimous agreement at this meeting. They are as follows:

- President: Greg Ratta
- Vice-President: Aneta Wierzynska*
- Treasurer: Deborah Toppenberg-Pejcic
- Secretary: Karin Holm Randall

* Due to scheduling conflicts, Aneta Wierzynska was not able to participate in the 2 June 2013 meeting. In the absence of an attendee interested in serving as Vice-President, Greg Ratta requested and received the unanimous agreement of the participants to ask Aneta to serve in this capacity. Subsequent to the meeting Aneta, having reviewed the modified Statutes, agreed to be a member of the association and to serve as the UUG Vice-President.

Submitted by
Karin Holm Randall
(Secretary, UUG)

Annex 1 – Statutes of the Unitarian Universalists of Geneva, adopted on 2 June 2013 in Grand Saconnex, Switzerland

Article I — Name

The “Unitarian Universalists of Geneva” (UUG) is a non-profit association, governed by the present statutes and, secondarily, by Articles 60 *et seq.* of the Swiss Civil Code. UUG is a politically neutral, religious fellowship. Except as otherwise provided in these Statutes, the said Articles of the Swiss Civil Code shall apply.

Article II — Purpose

The purpose of the association is to bring religiously liberal people located in and close to Switzerland, and particularly in the greater Geneva area, into closer acquaintance and cooperation for the purpose of developing liberal religious community through worship, tolerance, study, service and fellowship, guided by the seven principles and the six sources of our faith indicated in the Addendum on page 5.

Article III — Seat

The legal seat of the association is located where the treasurer legally resides.

Article IV — Membership

4.1 Eligibility

Any person 18 years of age or above may become a voting member of the UUG who is in sympathy with its purpose and principles, and who has signified such by signing the association's membership book.

Membership is open to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin.

Participation in UUG activities is not restricted to members.

4.2 Termination

Membership in the UUG is terminated:

- 1) upon the death of the member,
- 2) if explicitly relinquished by written notification from the member to an officer,
- 3) after the member is no longer in attendance at association functions for more than one year,
- 4) the member has not made a financial contribution to the association during the previous year, or
- 5) extraordinarily, for other reasons in accordance with the processes identified within the UUG Operations Manual.

Termination for reasons 3) or 4) shall happen after reasonable efforts to contact the member have been made. Termination for reasons 3) or 4) shall not apply when an individual has expressed an interest in remaining a member and this interest has been accepted by the Steering Committee.

Article V — Denominational Affiliation

The UUG shall be a member of the Association of European Unitarian Universalists.

Article VI — Meetings

6.1 Regular Meetings

The regular meetings and religious services of the UUG shall be determined by the association itself or any person or persons designated by it.

6.2 Annual Meetings

The Annual Meeting shall be held each year by the end of December at such time and place as shall be fixed by the Steering Committee. Each officer and committee chair shall present an annual report of her or his activities at the Annual Meeting.

6.3 Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the Steering Committee or at the written request of any five members of the association.

6.4 Notice of Annual and Special Meetings

Notice of Annual and Special Meetings shall be made in writing, and sent by e-mail or by ordinary mail, to the last known address of each member. The notice shall set forth the agenda and be given at least two weeks prior to such meeting.

6.5 Decision making at Annual and Special Meetings

In keeping with the principle to use democratic processes within our congregations, all decisions shall be made through voting. Except for modifications to the Statutes, a majority vote at any meeting of the association will be 50% + 1 vote of those members voting in person or in writing through an absentee ballot. For modifications to the Statutes, a majority vote at any meeting of the association will be 2/3 vote of those members voting person or in writing through an absentee ballot. Any proxies shall be submitted and executed in accordance with the rules identified within the UUG Operations Manual.

The determination of quorum shall be made in accordance with the rules identified within the UUG Operations Manual.

Article VII — Officers and Steering Committee

7.1 Officers

7.1.1 Selection, term of office and duties

At each Annual Meeting there shall be chosen a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, who shall serve as officers for one year beginning first day month following Annual Meeting, or until their successors have been elected. They shall perform the duties usually pertaining to these offices. All officers shall be voting members of the UUG, and shall agree to serve as part of the Steering Committee. Interim officer positions may be filled mid-term by a two-thirds vote of the Steering Committee.

The duties of the officers are specified in the UUG Operations Manual, which is maintained by the Steering Committee.

7.1.2 Resignation

An officer may resign by sending a written notice of resignation to the Steering Committee. The officer's resignation shall become effective immediately upon receipt of such written notice.

7.2 Steering Committee

7.2.1 Composition and responsibilities

The Steering Committee, comprising the officers and the chairpersons of all standing committees established by the Steering Committee, shall have general charge of the property of the UUG and the conduct of its business affairs administration. The Steering Committee establishes policy, develops guidelines and appoints any standing committee it deems necessary and suitable in order to foster and provide for the continued development, promotion, organization and administration of UUG. Members of the association can be invited to regularly scheduled meetings by the Steering Committee. Standing committee chairs shall be appointed by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee shall consist of as many members as required.

In addition to the powers expressly mentioned in these by-laws, the Steering Committee shall have the powers indicated within the UUG Operations Manual.

7.2.2 Delegation

The Steering Committee may delegate its powers as and when necessary to an employee of the association.

7.2.3 Steering Committee Meetings and Special Resolutions

- a. A meeting of the Steering Committee may be held physically or by telephone, videoconference or by any other means of simultaneous communication or by a combination of such means.
- b. Special Resolutions: Unless an objection is raised by an officer, the Steering Committee may vote, without holding a meeting, on a special resolution of any kind in writing, including by electronic means, provided a record of such writings is maintained.
- c. All decisions shall be made through the agreement of at least a simple majority (50% + 1 vote) of the Steering Committee. It is desirable that attempts be made to reach consensus before resorting to a vote on all matters.

7.2.4 Special Committees

The Steering Committee may create special committees within its members for any special purpose. Their formation and composition shall be in the discretion of the Steering Committee.

7.3 Remuneration

Officers and chairpersons of standing committees shall exercise their office in an honorary capacity and shall not be remunerated. Upon resolution by the Steering Committee, an officer or chairperson of a standing committee may, however, be reimbursed for any expenses incurred on behalf of the association.

Article VIII — Fiscal Year

The fiscal year shall be a calendar year, starting 1st January and ending 31st December.

Article IX — Amendment

These statutes, so far as allowed by Swiss law, may be amended or replaced at the Annual Meeting or at a Special Meeting of the UUG using the decision making process identified in Art. 6.5 provided that sufficient notice has been given as specified in Art. 6.4.

Article X — Dissolution

Should the UUG cease to function and the remaining membership vote to disband, any assets of the association shall be assigned to the Association of European Unitarian Universalists (EUU) or, if EUU is defunct, to the International Council of Unitarian Universalists (ICUU) to be used for the extension of liberal religion. This transfer shall be made in full compliance with whatever Swiss laws are applicable.

Article XI — Financial

Any liabilities of UUG are covered by the assets of the association solely. The members have no further financial liability.

Article XII — Statutes

The Unitarian Universalists of Geneva shall use the English language version of their statutes to conduct internal business. The French language version shall be written to meet the legal requirements for being *une association suisse*.

Signed, Grand-Saconnex, Genève, CH

Founding Members:

Daryl Newton	<signed on original>_____
Deborah Toppenberg-Pejcic	<signed on original>_____
Karin Holm Randall	<signed on original>_____
Greg Ratta	<signed on original>_____

Original version: 2 June 2013

Addendum to Article II

There are seven principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Unitarian Universalism (UU) draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

These principles and sources of faith are the backbone of our religious community.