

DAKOTA ASSOCIATION; affiliate of the Council for American Indian Ministry of the United Church of Christ, Eagle Butte, SD

Unified Governance Workshop Results:

Facilitator/Organizer: Winifred Boub, Administrator of Dakota Association
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In response to request of Juanita Helphrey, the Council for American Indian Ministry delegate to the Unified Governance Task Force II, the Dakota Association called upon members and representatives of the 13 churches in its ministries to discuss the two questions: What is your response for the Unified Governance Working Group, and What do you believe God is calling the UCC to be now and into the future.

Advance materials had been provided in preparation for this discussion, including the resolution and the core principles. It must be made known, however, that Dakota Association has been in ministry to its people for decades, and in its 40 year involvement with CAIM, has been active both locally and nationally for that many years and more. Thus, they were not strangers to, nor lack knowledge of, events happening nationally.

To begin the workshop, they asked themselves a number of questions to initiate conversation that dealt with their own ministry, their own goals, and, to get to specifics as to how their activities and mission would be impact or could impact national goals as discussions were being held anew on revamping or reorganizing at the national level.

They reminded themselves of the importance of knowing the history of the UCC; knowing their own history; having a clear mission and ministry in their own churches and in their community; acknowledging to themselves, to one another, that their mission and ministry is very important; that it fulfills spiritual needs; and that it gives purpose to focusing on needs of other.

They also acknowledge that in their communities there are many financial needs that cannot be met because of poverty, but keeping spirituality and relationships as top priority can be done as well as continuing to help churches focus on purpose by building community through social interaction as well as spiritual.

They acknowledge that it is important to be involved outside their ministry area for this is where they gather ideas on how to work more effectively and cooperatively, which helps their vision, and that being involved with other churches to share visions, exchange ideas, and seek theological partners with similar needs, concerns, and vision is important.

After this discussion, the following two statements are their response to call from the UGWGII to discuss the two questions outlined above:

First, we Dakota Association have always been and still are against this restructuring of the national UCC. We feel that it extremely limits our ability to adequately be represented with the national setting of the UCC. The smaller boards and longer meeting times restrict who will be able to attend and participate in the national setting. This extremely deteriorates the inclusion of church members who would like to assist with the direction the UCC is going, now and in the future. The fact that more push is going toward using internet technology, a lot of our members still won't be able to participate due to the rural area and cost factor of obtaining necessary equipment and internet connection (remembering that we suffer extreme poverty in communities our churches are active in).

Second, the Church should be the first one there whenever there is a crisis or a need to address and not wait for other social, governmental organizations to do this. The UCC needs to continue to be there for the people in always possible ensuring that God's love is shown to all who need it. We must continue to seek justice for where there is none, seek to feed the people not just spiritually but physically and to take the lead in care for this, our Mother Earth.