

General Assembly 2007 Planning Committee Prepares Important Schedule Changes

Each year a team that includes members of the Planning Committee, Commission on Social Witness, Youth Caucus, Young Adult Caucus, General Assembly office staff and the Moderator meets to examine the General Assembly schedule and recommend a schedule to the GA Planning Committee. They consult with others as needed to draft a General Assembly schedule that will serve the needs of delegates and other attendees. The draft schedule is reviewed and finalized by the Planning Committee.

The schedule for the 2007 Portland General Assembly presented unique challenges, including integrating the newly-approved Social Witness process, conducting a candidates' forum, and providing time each day for covenant groups. The greatest challenge was providing significant time for the core business of the Association: determining what difference Unitarian Universalism should make in the world. This vital conversation, which will be conducted using Open Space Technology, is long overdue. General Assembly 2007 will be the first time congregational delegates have discussed the purposes of the Association since the consolidation of Unitarians and Universalists forty-five years ago. Plenary hours were reduced and workshop blocks added to address these challenges.

There is one other significant change to the schedule. Based in part on evaluations from attendees at previous General Assemblies, we moved the Sunday worship service from the morning to the afternoon and eliminated the Closing Celebration. There were two reasons for this change:

- In Portland, General Assembly will conclude with a powerful communal worship experience, an appropriate ending for the annual meeting of our religious communities.
- General Assembly will be finished six hours earlier than in recent years, so more local attendees will be able to drive home on Sunday. Attendees who need to return home by Monday morning could choose to take overnight flights.

The Closing Worship Service will begin at 4 pm and end at 6 pm. Members of the public are welcome at the service. The Rev. Josh Pawelek will be preaching, and music will be provided by the choir of First UU Church Portland. In recent years the GA Choir has performed in the Closing Celebration. This year, the choir will have a separate concert as had been the case at prior General Assemblies. The GA Choir will perform on Sunday afternoon after lunch.

The changes in the 2007 GA schedule are provisional. Feedback will be solicited and considered when making decisions for the schedule for GA 2008.