

A HISTORIC EVENT

During April 25th to April 28th, the Pacific Central District hosted an historic event in San Jose, CA, that drew over 680 children, youth and adults. The group came from almost 50% of the American geography of the Unitarian Universalist Association. This geographic area is called the Pacific Western Region and is comprised of the Pacific Northwest, the Mountain Desert, the Pacific Southwest and the Pacific Central districts. The purpose of the region is to share leadership and mutually empower each other through collaborative programming.

On Friday, during the day, the boards and professional organizations from the four districts of the Pacific Western Region convened and on Friday evening the attendees gathered for an opening celebration. The focus of this celebration challenged our response to the revolutionary landscape of our present culture and called for us to become a true religious movement by moving outside the boxes that bind us to the waning power of traditional ways of doing mission and ministry.

Worship and workshops were the focus on Saturday followed by a banquet in the evening. While other important workshops were offered, the primary focus was three track workshops suggested by President Peter Morales' vision of empowering our faith witness through: Get Religion, Grow Leaders, Cross Borders.

On Sunday morning those attending heard from the two candidates for the UUA moderator position. Then, the entire San Jose and Mission Peak congregations joined the assemblage for a profoundly moving closing worship experience that centered on the motto of the Pacific Western Region: Big Faith-No Borders.

Here are a few of the remarks I heard that essentially characterize what seems to have been the general quality of the experience for those attending:

- The elephants in our religious experience were named.
- Far more rewarding than a General Assembly: large enough for real impact and small enough to feel a sense of profound community.
- A challenging and growth inducing experience.
- Moving, rewarding, fulfilling, joyful, celebrative, exhilarating, wonderful.
- I almost didn't come. Wow - what I would have missed!

Underneath the experience was a hopeful sense of what we can do when we gather in collaborative power as opposed to the sense of frustrated impotence of isolation we tend to feel when trying to go it alone.

May this be a portent of our future.

Rev. Robert T. Latham, Interim District Executive

PS: Kudos to the staff of the four districts for the vision and work that launched this event. They truly expressed leadership, crossed borders and collaborated to make this religious experience happen.