

UCN Cookbook for CUC ACM Delegates and Attendees

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Annual Conference

The Fun Part

The Annual Conference and Meeting is a highlight Unitarian experience of many members of the CUC. It brings Unitarians from all across Canada to meet each other, to experience new ideas and to plan for the next year. Workshops are chosen to be on topics that are relevant and timely for attendees. Workshop leaders strive to make their sessions interesting and informative. Check out the previous Annual Conferences and Meetings.

With such a rich schedule the major drawback is that attendees can not be in many places at once and have to choose the sessions that they attend. Fortunately attendees can network with other attendees during meal and free times in order to catch up on missed sessions.

The Annual Conference is open to anyone, not just delegates. You can just be an attendee. Many delegates bring their significant others who can have a very enjoyable time attending conference sessions.

Below are some tips on Annual Conference events.

Opening and Closing Ceremonies

Banner

There is a banner parade in which delegates have to march the congregation's banner. Bring the banner and the pole. During the Conference, banners are left in the main meeting place. At the closing ceremony, delegates march the banners out. Attendees typically sit back and watch the show.

Keynote Speaker

The conference usually has an informative, entertaining yet thought provoking keynote speaker.

Early Morning Meditations

While the schedule is hectic, there are typically morning meditations that can be very restful, positive and they can set up the day.

Eating Arrangements

It is always a good idea to attend one of the scheduled meals in order to network and meet people. The meals are not cheap, some of the cafeteria meals are definitely institutional but the contacts you meet are invaluable. In order to maximize the number of people that you meet you can try to sit with different people at each meal.

International Dinner

Typically there is an International Dinner in which representatives from international Unitarian organizations describe their history and current activities. The food is good and the talk is stimulating.

Award Diner

The Knight award diner honours a Unitarian for the work that they have done. There is no prior announcement of the winner. People usually dress up a little for this event.

Empty Bowls

Participation in the Empty Bowls Meal is optional. Participation in the meal requires that you bring a handcrafted bowl and a money donation fifty per cent goes to the CUC and fifty per cent goes to a charity selected by the hosting congregation. The money is from our congregation. Check with the board to see if UCN is prepared to make such a donation.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting is the business portion of the Annual Conference and Meeting. The CUC is required by Canadian Corporation Act to have an Annual Meeting within six months of their year end, to have delegates approve the auditor and to approve the previous year's results and to elect new board of directors.

The Annual meeting is attended by official delegates. Each congregation can have one or more delegates depending on their size. Delegates must attend and proxy votes are not allowed.

Sponsored delegates have additional duties after the conference that are described at the bottom of this page.

Duties of an Official Delegate - Before the Meeting

Keep up to date on the resolutions

Keep up to date on the resolutions and discussed items. The CUC will post draft versions of the resolutions that will be discussed at the meeting. You should read them and be totally familiar with the details of the resolutions. You may have to hold a session to review the resolution with the congregation. At a minimum, the resolution should be forwarded to UCN Board members in a timely fashion for their review.

Keep up to date with the Financials

The CUC will begin to distribute the financial results from the previous year and my distribute a proposed budget. Review the numbers and forward the documents to the UCN Board members for discussion. If anything looks weird, write the CUC asking for clarification.

Meet with the UCN Board prior to the ACM to discuss and elaborate the UCN's position on current CUC national and organizational issues.

Manage your status as an Official Delegate

Check that the UCN Board President has completed the necessary paperwork.
Forward necessary paperwork to the CUC.
Check that the CUC has registered you as an official delegate with the CUC.

Duties of an Official Delegate – At the Meeting

On Arrival Register as an Official Delegate

When you register at the CUC, make sure that you also register as an official delegate. They will provide you with a voting card.

Attend all sessions of the Annual Meeting

The annual meeting runs during the Annual Conference. As an official delegate, you have to attend these sessions. Typically this will mean that you will not be able to attend Annual Conference sessions that are running at the same time as an Annual Meeting sessions.

If you really want to attend conflicting conference sessions, do not go as an official delegate, but rather go as a conference attendee. There is no restriction on the number of people who can attend the conference and annual meeting from a congregation, just restrictions on the number of official delegates. Conference attendees can go the Annual Meeting sessions but they will not be allowed to vote.

Sign in at the beginning of Each Session

At the beginning of each Annual Meeting session you are required to log in. This is done to ensure that there is a quorum for each session so that the results of any vote taken will be binding.

Speak up at all sessions

Try to ensure that all the issues identified at the pre-ACM UCN board meeting are addressed.

As a congregational church, the CUC Board of Directors are not above you nor our congregation. They are just volunteers like you and me. There is no need to defer to them, speak in hushed tones or stammer when speaking at the microphone.

Make Notes During the Sessions

You are expected to report back after the Annual Meeting to our congregation so keep notes.

Tips for Official Delegates

CUC Resolutions

The CUC may be planning to pass a resolution. As a congregational church, the only way for a resolution to become a CUC resolution is for all congregations to review it before the meeting. Ideally our congregation has already discussed it. If it has not, then you must bring the proposed resolution to the UCN Board for review. Bring all suggested amendments to the Board meeting and be prepared to discuss them. Your job is to represent the congregation at the ACM and vote as if the whole congregation is voting.

Emergency resolutions rising during the meeting can be passed however they can not become a Canadian Unitarian Council resolution. These resolutions will be described as a « Resolution that was supported by delegates at the CUC meeting ». This means that changes to CUC Bylaws and policies can not be addressed through an emergency resolution.

Power at the CUC

Social psychologists have studied group dynamics of people and noticed some alarming tendencies. When a customer complains to a clerk about some merchandise, other customers will automatically begin to side with the clerk. Watch out for this phenomena and be supportive of anyone who is asking questions or complaining. Remember that Unitarianism is a place where you go to have your answers questioned.

While the CUC Board are volunteers it does not mean that they are above taking themselves seriously. Board members can be curt in their replies, dismissive, or pompous at times. I remember one instance where a Vice President stated that he was appalled that a member made a suggestion to freeze fee increases. This is not the Unitarian way, but sadly is the way of life. Be prepared to support and defend other delegates. Part of your job as a delegate is to ensure that respect, logic and the democratic way prevails at the Annual Meeting.

Fractured Metaphors

At the Annual Meeting we are all amateur speakers and thinkers. Sometimes you will hear words being placed together that do not make sense or will hear statements that make questionable metaphors. In theory, the breaking of semantic integrity could lead to a sense of mystery and awe or a new insight. In the 18th century, John Donne and the metaphysical poets jammed imagery from sciences and poetics to create what were called « conceits ». When you hear a fractured metaphor and a sentence that has been put through a verbal blender [image from Julianne Momirov] first of all question what the speaker is trying to achieve by the use of the term. For example, is the use of the term « spiritual budgeting » really about something spiritual or is the speaker saying « I do not want you to question me about my budgeting».

Post Conference and Meeting

Duties of Conference Attendees and Meeting Delegates

Share Your Experiences

Whether you are a delegate, a sponsored delegate or just an attendee you should share your experience with others. Share your experiences in a service. Share your experiences in our monthly Newsletter.

Delegates Report to Board

Before going to the meeting, delegates and the board met and discussed issues. After the meeting, give an update to the board.

Alert the Congregation

Contact the board if you see any issues that require congregational level response.

Alert Communications

If resolutions have been passed give communications a heads up to watch for the CUC issuing a resolution new document that will have to be sent to all members.

Duties of Sponsored Official Delegate

If possible, the Unitarian Congregation of Niagara will provide funding to members to help defray some of the delegate costs. The amount provided by the board will vary according to the number of delegates sent and the distance to the annual meeting. In return for partial funding, the board will expect funded delegates to perform all the duties of an official delegate mentioned above. After the meeting sponsored delegates have the following additional tasks:

Lead One Sunday Service

Lead at least one (1) regular Sunday service related to the content of the conference. Be on the lookout for material throughout the sessions and talk to strangers (i.e. the other delegates or session leaders).

Lead One Committee

Provide substantial leadership of at least one (1) committee during the ensuing year.

Appendix 1 Other Pre-Conference Meetings

CUC Board Meeting

The CUC Board of Directors gets together two days before the meeting and spends the full day before the meeting in sessions. The sessions are open for members to watch. No registration is required.

Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

The Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice holds their annual meeting on the day before the CUC annual meeting. Registration for this event is separate from CUC ACM registration.