



23 May 2017

Dear Members,

I want to give you an update on what has been happening in the ICUU since our Council Meeting & Conference in July 2016. I came on as your new Executive Director in August and jumped right into the work. The months of transition from Rev. Steve Dick's leadership to mine seemed to go pretty smoothly. I am grateful for his guidance, wisdom, and support as I took on the responsibilities of this vital and exciting work.

As many of you know if you have followed me on Facebook, I have visited many of our global family of faith and there are more visits to come as 2017 progresses. These in-person visits have allowed me to listen carefully to your concerns and your hopes; to see first-hand the work you are all doing; and to learn why our connection to one another is so important at a time when so much seems to be dividing people.

The message I continually hear from many of you during my visits and in your email and our video call communications is that you want more frequent and deeper connections to one another, and that creating a stronger, more clearly articulated Unitarian/Universalist identity is crucial to your growth. And let's not forget the work we started together in the Netherlands to review and update the way ICUU functions and works as an organization.

To reach these goals the Executive Committee (the "EC") and I have been working hard to address the evolving needs of our Member Groups and the new groups seeking to join the ICUU. To this end we have created a Consulting Team that over the next several months will review the Membership Guidelines and Policies of the ICUU and create recommendations for improvements. Our hope is to have new guidelines and policies to share with the full Council at our February 2018 Council Meeting & Conference. This team of dedicated and skilled representatives of our Full Member Groups is passionate about shaping the ICUU Membership requirements, expectations, and benefits to reflect the realities of our existing members and to better address the nature of emerging groups.

I offer a huge thank you to the team of Emőd Farkas representing the Hungarian Unitarian Church, Jaume de Marcos representing Sociedad Unitaria Universalista de España, Rev. Linda Simmons representing the UUA, and Rev. Tet Gallardo representing the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines. Representing the ICUU Executive Committee is Member-at-Large, Inga Brandes. Please offer your thanks to these volunteers if you get the chance, and stay tuned for the results of our work.

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*The mission of the ICUU is to empower existing and emerging member groups to sustain and grow our global faith community.*

Addressing the needs for a review of ICUU's governance structure is next on the list. We will bring together a team of volunteers to assist the EC in ensuring how we do the work of the ICUU and who makes what decisions is transparent and clear.

To begin to address the issue of greater and deeper connections, ICUU has applied to the UUA Funding Panel for grants to assist the development of regional collaborations among ICUU Member Groups. The hope is to create ways for groups to connect within and beyond their regions in order to better support one another, to cooperate on events or programs, and to help build a stronger relationship and reduce the sense of isolation among Unitarians living in many regions of the world. We do not know yet whether this grant will come through, but we are hopeful that even without this financial assistance we will create ways for Member Groups to be more tightly connected to each other.

Plans for our next Council Meeting & Conference on 11 February through 15 February 2018 in Shillong, India are well under way. I offer a big thank you to the leadership team of the Unitarian Union of North East India for all their hard work in helping the conference come together. Registration for the Council Meeting is now open: you should already have received the registration form and brochure. You can also register through the ICUU website.

We continue to hear from individuals and groups all over the world wishing to be connected to a larger Unitarian/Universalist family of faith. The need for our liberal, hopeful, free faith has not disappeared or diminished. It is the commitment of the ICUU's Executive Committee, which I share, to ensure the strength and growth of our faith communities. Thank you for your trust in us and for your support of our efforts to better serve you.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to email me at [execdir@icuu.info](mailto:execdir@icuu.info). And I hope to meet more of you during my visits to Member Groups and certainly to see all of you in February in the Khasi Hills!

Blessings,



Rev. Sara Ascher  
Executive Director