

Foundation Leadership Forum 5 — How Can We Help One Another

Date: 2026-04-26 **Duration:** approximately 1 hour 5 minutes **Chair:** Chris Wood **Closing remarks:** Mo Siegel

Overview

The closing forum of the Leadership Roundtable, framed by chair Chris Wood as an open conversation: each participant offered either what they could contribute or what they would like to see from others. Wood opened with a caution: don't volunteer other people; if you have an idea, be prepared to do it yourself. Approximately fifteen substantive interventions followed, addressing coordination, AI, communication mechanisms, leadership culture, and concrete next steps. Mo Siegel closed with personal reflections and an invitation to continue the work.

Speakers (in order of contribution)

- **Chris Wood** — chair, Trustee, Urantia Foundation
- **Claire Thurston** — President, UUI
- **Alejandra Rodriguez** — Fellowship; Spanish-speaking communities and Dubai
- **Gabriel Rymberg** — Center for Unity
- **Mark Wood** — UB Fellowship publications, Malta
- **Sue Seccombe** — President, UB Fellowship
- **Douglas Burns** — Bay Area study group; Fellowship General Council; UAI member
- **Margie Ray** — Center for Unity
- **Barb Maier** — IFC, Anchorage Alaska
- **Sally Anabella** — IFC; Central Washington

- **Pablo Morales** — Fellowship; Spanish-speaking communities
 - **Lisa Crawford** — Urantia Foundation
 - **Geoff Theiss** — Executive Director, UB Fellowship
 - **Mo Siegel** — Trustee, Urantia Foundation (closing)
-

Topics Stated

A communication mechanism across organisations (Claire Thurston)

Thurston, as President of UUI, offered to produce a monthly progress report aggregating updates from emerging cross-organisation teams. She named several teams already forming: Gabriel Rymberg, Gary Tonge, and Derek Grimm on a video-media pilot; Jim Zigarelli, Geoff Theiss, and Gabriel Rymberg on an analytics team that may also include training and a social-media service team. She offered her UUI email address as the contact point and described her board's recent practice of dedicating the first 15 minutes of each meeting to sharing what each member has been working on.

Chris Wood added a framing: organisations tend to report only finished work; readers are interested in works-in-progress and the road bumps along the way.

Coordinate AI efforts globally without unifying platforms (Alejandra Rodriguez)

Rodriguez argued for global coordination of AI work across the Urantia organisations — not unification of platforms, but shared knowledge, mutual support, and avoidance of redundant tasking. She framed the people best served by community AI capacity-building as those without technical backgrounds, especially leaders of strong but tech-naive communities.

A knowledge centre and AI task force (Gabriel Rymberg)

Rymberg proposed an AI knowledge-centre / task-force model: a single point of contact where any community member can ask "How do I do this?" and receive guidance, training, and workshops. He

framed AI as an array of capabilities — not just prompts and subscriptions — and offered to transcribe and mine the Roundtable's full audio for summaries if it could be obtained.

Permission to report on the event in the Fellowship newsletter (Mark Wood)

Wood announced he had already produced his own transcript of the Roundtable and asked permission to report on the event in the Fellowship's *Herald*. Mo Siegel granted permission. Wood also asked whether a task force would be formed to coordinate next steps; Mo asked him to volunteer, and Wood accepted in principle.

Mo stated his intention to convene the Roundtable annually and that he wanted a week or two to consider how to follow up.

The sandbox concept (Sue Seccombe)

Seccombe proposed a sandbox model for cross-organisational collaboration: a shared workspace structure where work in different domains (audio-visual, education, events, study groups, Spanish, Africa) could incubate. She framed this differently from Claire's communication-across-organisations role: sandboxes would have permeable edges and would not be owned by any single organisation, allowing a sixteen-year-old creator with a good idea to enter the AV sandbox alongside long-time community members. She emphasised the incubator function — not "every practice" but the curation of best practices.

A caution on vendor lock-in (Douglas Burns)

Burns urged the community to favour open and low-cost technology over proprietary products, citing the Fellowship's earlier dependence on an Adobe product that was discontinued, and noting that AI now makes it easy to spin up open-source solutions for individual problems.

Joshua's Workshop and a parents' portal (Margie Ray)

Ray described the Center for Unity's new Joshua's Workshop project, focused on children twelve and under, with age-appropriate content groupings. She framed the project's purpose as a touch point for young families: a single place where parents can find videos, study aids, and other content for their

children — including content created by others. She gave the example of being unable to find Trudy Cooper's children's video from a few years prior, which prompted the design.

She noted that Bower Tree (Kate and Zach Wheeler), referenced in the previous day's education forum, is a project she had not been aware of even though Kate and Zach attend her own study group. She offered this as evidence of the broader coordination gap.

Lanes for the four organisations (Barb Maier)

Maier referenced Sue Seccombe's audience-funnel diagram from the Internationalisation forum (awareness → interest → consideration → trial → repeat → engagement) and proposed that each organisation candidly identify which segments of the funnel it does well, which it does not, and which it duplicates with others. She named: Foundation as strong in awareness/translations; Fellowship as strong in social organisation and field communication; UAI and UUI as the ones she is less familiar with but knows do strong work. She framed the current pattern as organisations operating in each other's lanes, competing for money, volunteers, and resources.

Excitement about engaging younger generations (Sally Anabella)

Anabella expressed enthusiasm for video-based outreach to younger audiences, citing the rise of the religious "nones" — by her stated figure, 33 percent of nones being teens and young adults — as a primed audience for the work.

Adapting language to engage children (Pablo Morales)

Morales described reading the Urantia Book paper-by-paper with his children and nephews from the age of seven to eleven. He found that he had to adapt the language with stories, analogies, and real-life examples to sustain their attention. His daughter, now in her late twenties on her third reading, recently told him: *"I really like the Urantia Book papers, but you are doing it in the wrong way. That's why you don't see people like me participating in the groups."* He framed this as the central insight: not just reaching the young, but learning how to meet them in their language and life context. He affirmed Gabriel's framing of AI as a key enabling tool.

Distribution and promotion of community videos (chair: Chris Wood, with Lisa Crawford, Sue Seccombe, Geoff Theiss, Gabriel Rymberg, Mo Siegel)

Wood opened a discussion on how the institutions can promote the highest-quality community-produced videos. The exchange touched several proposals:

- **Lisa Crawford** asked what the criteria for "best" should be, noting that community sharing is currently subjective.
- **Sue Seccombe** proposed a community rating system — analogous to Amazon reviews — with the option to slice ratings by age cohort, on the model of feedback the Foundation considered when it launched the translations library.
- **Geoff Theiss** referenced an Angel Studios model: community endorsement and storytelling participation in selected pieces, rather than competing on YouTube discovery; the goal is to make a piece "shareable" at the level of person-to-neighbour, with stickiness rooted in actual community.
- **Gabriel Rymberg** noted that Angel Studios has approximately one million members who not only donate but vote on which projects are produced. He framed "build in public" as an opportunity: telling people about works in progress is part of the engagement, not a leak.
- **Mo Siegel** referenced Truth Book's actual high-performing topics (cited views: 418,000 for "Conditions of Effective Prayer", 250,000 for "Five Steps to Lasting World Peace", 315,000 for "Why Does God Allow Suffering?", and others on Jesus's teachings on gender equality), and proposed bifurcating content for internal versus external audiences — confirming David Kantor's earlier 6–15-percent estimate of public-facing content.

Wood closed the topic by noting that institutional social-media accounts (Twitter, Instagram) can be used to promote community videos — the institutional newsletter is not the right venue for daily promotion.

A reflection on trust and structure (Geoff Theiss)

Theiss proposed a thought experiment: what if it were just the people in the room, with no organisational structures, like the apostles when Jesus stepped away. He argued that the institutional structures may be obscuring rather than enabling the trust and listening that the work requires. He named several examples: the Fellowship's organisational form, the Foundation's, and so on. He stated that his own trust in faithful translation comes from his trust in Mo Siegel, Tamara Strumfeld, and the Foundation team — not from a document.

He framed the central challenge as figuring out a containerless way of trusting one another, with the maturity, audacious goals (faithful translation, community, engaging media, lifelong learning), and forty-year track record present in the room.

Chris Wood added a reframing: each generation organises itself in the way that best serves that generation; organisations must remain dynamic to serve the future, or they become tombstones for later generations to replace.

Lisa Crawford added a parable from her experience in the Unitarian Universalist Church: a congregation that had been dynamic in the 1960s and 1970s did not invite new members into leadership when they arrived later, and those people drifted away. The lesson was that adaptation requires shared leadership.

Courage (Sue Seccombe — second-to-last word)

Seccombe stated that spiritual longevity should not be confused with spiritual maturity. She framed the leaders' role as making decisions based on the Father's plan and not worrying about consequences. *"The act is ours."*

Closing wrap (Chris Wood and Mo Siegel)

Wood listed tangible items emerging from the Roundtable that should not be dropped:

- Standardising authorship attribution pages on Amazon
- Collaboration hubs (UUI offered to host, with the expanded scope of being more public than UUI alone, in the manner of the study-group directory)
- A leadership-roundtable task force

He cautioned: *"If you want to make sure something happens over the next year, congratulations, you are on that task force, and you are probably the chair."*

Mo Siegel stated this is the first leadership gathering of this kind in his fifty-five years of involvement and committed to convening it again. He framed the work as cooperation across organisations that helps each other prevent mistakes. He encouraged participants to apply to the Foundation's Mustard Seed Programme and to other Fellowship grant programmes for project funding.

After Mo's close, Geoff Theiss raised the question of an opt-in continuing communication mechanism — he proposed a WhatsApp or Slack channel. Mo asked Theiss to set it up.

Sue Seccombe thanked Mo for convening the gathering.

The session closed with Rick Lyon screening a re-lyriced Don McLean–style video framed as "a grandpa's message to his grandchildren" — a personal pitch for the revelation as a gift across generations.

Notable Quotes (verbatim)

- **Chris Wood** on the rule of contribution: *"If you have a great idea, make sure you are willing to put in your volunteer time to execute that idea and offer that up. Because if your idea is someone else needs to do something else, they have their plates full already."*
- **Chris Wood** on transparency: *"Build in public."*
- **Sue Seccombe** introducing the sandbox concept: *"What we're looking for is something like a place where things can incubate... we need a creative sandbox for audio visual. We need an education box. We need an events sandbox... these sandboxes need to almost be structured, like the study group portal, where there isn't really an organisation that owns the fluidity of what comes in and out."*
- **Sue Seccombe** on best practices: *"We can't just do a little bit of everything. The focus part of it is we have to push ourselves for best practices... of everything in that sandbox, there's a few things maybe that will be the most effective or the most useful."*
- **Pablo Morales**, quoting his daughter: *"I really like the Urantia Book papers, but you are doing it in the wrong way. That's why you don't see people like me participating in the groups."*
- **Geoff Theiss** on trust: *"My trust is in the people. So I don't know what to do about it. But... we could figure out a way to trust each other and figure out how to solve this problem of listening to this ever-widening movement."*
- **Chris Wood** on dynamism: *"Each generation will organise itself in the way that best serves that generation... If they remain static, they will be like tombstones later for the future social generations to replace."*
- **Sue Seccombe** in the second-to-last word: *"Let's not confuse spiritual longevity with spiritual maturity... Our windshield is six times bigger than our rear-view mirror. We should be looking for the things that are putting drag on the engine... The act is ours."*
- **Chris Wood** in the closing: *"If you want to make sure something happens over the next year, congratulations, you are on that task force, and you are probably the chair."*

- **Mo Siegel** in the closing: *"We're cutting new ground. We're building a new highway between one another."*
- **Mo Siegel** quoting Edwin Markham (paraphrased): *"He drew a circle and shut me out. Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. But love and I had the wit to win — we drew a circle and took him in."*