

Agenda for the Special Meeting of the UUA Board of Trustees
Thursday, February 4, 2010
7:00 to 9:00 pm, Eastern Time

TRANSFORMING GOVERNANCE
FOR THE SECOND HALF-CENTURY

6:45 pm, all participants begin joining the conference system. Pre-registration is required to join. This special meeting will be conducted by a web-based conference. Instructions to join the meeting as a participant or observer follow the text of the motion under consideration.

7:00 Meeting called to order by Moderator Courter.

- a) Brief review of the rules of conduct on the conferencing system. They are simple, but important, because we expect this to be the largest web-based meeting we have ever conducted.
- b) Introduction of the Motion
- c) Debate and discussion of the motion by Trustees.
- d) Call for questions and comments from observers as time permits.
- e) Call for the vote on the Motion.
- f) Closing comments

9:00pm or earlier: Adjourn

**TRANSFORMING GOVERNANCE
FOR THE SECOND HALF-CENTURY**

From the UUA Board of Trustees, Feb. 4, 2010

In 2011, we will mark fifty years since the consolidation of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America. In that half-century, we have much to celebrate. Still, given the breadth and strength of our faith, at this time of reckoning, we confess a sense of unfulfilled potential. We can do better. For the next half-century, what is necessary for our faith to flourish? There is no simple answer, but part of the answer is a fundamental shift in governance. That is why the Board requested the motion on “Transforming Governance.”

“Governance” means to define expectations, delegate power, verify performance, and provide accountability. For instance, after wide-ranging conversations throughout our movement, the Board defined expectations by naming the Association’s “Ends”—or major goals. In our Association, governance happens at four levels: Congregations, General Assembly, Districts, and the UUA Board. In our motion, we address only the last three.

Over the last forty-nine years, at least five separate task forces have studied governance in our movement. These task forces have all described the same basic condition: our governance is too complex. They have observed that we elect leaders but do not authorize them to do their jobs, that the Board of Trustees is too big to be effective, and that General Assembly is too expensive—especially when many delegates are not accountable representatives of their congregation’s priorities. In short, these task forces have observed systemic brokenness in the governance of our Association. These systemic issues make it nigh-impossible to define or fulfill expectations, to delegate power, and to verify performance. This brokenness makes it impossible for us all--whether in governance, administration, or ministry--to do what is necessary for our movement to flourish in this new century.

The time for task forces and study groups is over. We do not need another report. What we need are changes that will clarify roles, engage

democratic participation, and align our movement around clear, common goals and values. And those changes have already begun. As the Fifth Principle Task Force report noted, “Our Association is a system in change.”

The UUA Board’s adoption of Policy Governance® continues to yield greater clarity about what is the work of the Board and what is the work of the Administration. Though the Board is becoming more effective in its governance, its work is hobbled by its large size. With 24 members, the Board resembles a small town meeting more than a functioning Board. Additionally, the expense of such a Board is unacceptable. Though every Trustee risks losing his or her seat, and many of us will, our desire to serve our Association pales beside our common purpose in realizing an effective Board for the Association. That is why we will ask the delegates at General Assembly to reduce the size of the Board.

In an interrelated system, of course, one part affects another. So, as we look to reducing the size of the UUA Board, this raises questions about the role of districts. At a meeting between representatives of the UUA Board and the District Presidents Association in November of 2009, the group reached broad agreement that the “Ends” of our Association encompass the missions and Ends of the districts. There is continuing discussion about the current dual accountability of District staff—to District Boards and also to the UUA President. Already, staffing in districts has begun a shift toward shared resources through “regionalization.” This shift in staffing inevitably raises questions about the continuing purpose of District Boards.

We likewise have serious questions about General Assembly. Let us be clear that when we talk about possible changes to General Assembly, we refer to changes in governance—the work of the Plenary sessions—and not to the vital education or fellowship that happens at GA.

The UUA Board of Trustees needs to work in accountable partnership with Member Congregations. This partnership could be realized at General Assembly. But, as the Fifth Principle Task Force report documented, attendees at General Assembly are those who can afford to come and are rarely authorized to represent their congregations. Further, because our Sources of Authority and Accountability extend to groups beyond Member Congregations—such as youth and young

adults—future governance work needs to include these voices. We need engaged democracy, which joins the voices of current strength with the voices of emerging strength, forged in the crucible of our common values. Our movement depends on it.

The UUA Board dreams of a time when General Assembly is less about making statements and more about joining lived experience to lived experience and multiplying the power between us and beyond us. We dream of a time when local congregations are in covenanted partnership with their neighbors, working together toward the same life-changing, world-changing mission. We are committed to a time when the UUA Board of Trustees will be nimble, agile, and ready to respond to a world that needs Unitarian Universalism more than ever before.

We stand at a crucial moment in our history. We cannot take the survival of our movement for granted. Even more pressing is the cry of the world, hungry for a vibrant faith such as ours. That cry can be answered. The Beloved Community can be made real in this world. But it will not come by waiting. To reach that horizon requires a journey of us all. By this motion, we mean to take the first step. We invite you to come with us.

The MOTION

The UUA Board moves to adopt the following motion:

Because the next half-century of Unitarian Universalism requires excellence in governance, the UUA Board of Trustees will initiate a transformation of governance at the following levels:

- UUA Board
- General Assembly
- Districts and Regions

The UUA Board will lead by working with other Association leaders in these initial ways:

1. Working with congregational delegates at General Assemblies in 2011 and 2012 to amend the UUA by-laws to significantly reduce the size of the UUA Board;

TRANSFORMING GOVERNANCE FOR THE SECOND HALF-CENTURY

2. Inviting the President of the UUA, District Board Members, and District Presidents to continue our substantive discussion of the shift toward regionalization, during General Assembly 2010.
3. Holding some Board meetings in sites other than Boston, as in January 2010, to strengthen relationships with the Association's Member Congregations
4. Engaging youth and young adults and historically marginalized groups throughout Unitarian Universalism, to ensure that their voices are heard in our governance transformation as one of our Sources of Authority and Accountability.

=== end of the motion ===

Resources:

1. To contact your UUA Trustee:
<http://uua.org/aboutus/governance/boardtrustees/19052.shtml>
2. To view the UUA Ends, Sources of Authority and Accountability, and governance policies: <http://uua.org/aboutus/governance/policy/index.shtml>
3. The Fifth Principle Task Force Report can be found contained within the January 2010 Board Agenda material at:
<http://uua.org/aboutus/governance/boardtrustees/agendas/154178.shtml>

Notes:

Policy Governance® is the service mark of John and Miriam Carver. The authoritative website for the Policy Governance® model can be found at www.carvergovernance.com