Report from the Open UUA Committee
October 2013

Chair: Sam Trumbore, Members: Jennifer Carver, Cheri Cody, Dick Jacke

Charge

The original purpose of the Open UUA Committee was the implementation of UUA Bylaw C2-1, Rule G2-1 (a copy may be found at the end of this report). Rule G2-1 defines open governance of our Association. The key points of compliance with openness listed are:

1. providing advance notice of dates and locations of regular business meetings, and making agendas, reports and minutes available promptly;
2. providing avenues for comment on issues on the meetings' agendas;
3. accommodating observers at regular business meetings, with the exception of executive sessions.

With the initial implementation completed several years ago, the committee has moved from implementation to monitoring and advocating for compliance.

Compliance

Board

The UUA Board has done a good job of compliance, making the Board Packet available before regularly scheduled meetings and allowing observers to be present and comment. The Board has also made recordings of the meetings available upon request.

The Board and its working groups have not made the same effort however when meeting by telephone or in a retreat setting. For the most part, agendas are not made available for those meetings to the public, nor a way for people to observe. Our understanding is that these meetings have not been, for the most part, executive session meetings.

Committees

We have assessed compliance in two ways. We have surveyed what committees post on the UUA web site and we also did a "surveymonkey" survey recently of UUA Committee chairs. We find that:

- Few committees make public notice of their meetings dates and times.
- Even fewer publicly post agendas in advance of their meetings.
- Rarely is the opportunity offered for monitoring a conference call meeting.
- Reporting of meeting minutes/notes isn't timely or consistent.

UUA Staff

We are unsure what the Board wants from the UUA Staff in respect to compliance. Executive Limitation 2.2 titled: Treatment of Congregations: UUA Governance Manual states:

> With respect to member congregations or those congregations seeking membership, the President shall not cause or allow conditions, procedures, decisions or services that are untimely, disrespectful, inequitable, discriminatory or **not transparent.**

We realize the vision of Policy Governance is separating policy and ends from implementation, front loading requirements to give clear direction to staff. Yet to be effective, the UUA Staff does need to make elements of its process open and transparent, including direct input from individuals and member congregations.

Tools for Compliance

The Open UUA Committee appreciates both the positive value of Rule G2-1 and the challenge of compliance. The Committee itself sometimes finds itself out of compliance. So we have looked for ways to make compliance easier. Fortunately there are some excellent electronic tools UUA Committees can use.

- Google Calendar – the UUA Calendar displayed on the UUA web site uses Google Calendar for implementation. Once they have the permission, UUA Committees can post their meetings directly to the UUA Calender. The details of how to join a conference call and links do agendas, minutes and supporting documents can be displayed in the description. (visit the UUA Calendar at uua.org and look at our next meeting, 11/3 at 8pm EST)

- Electronic Meetings – Today there are many ways for a UUA Committee to meet virtually using telephone conference calls, Skype, Google Hangout, and other more sophisticated methods that include screen sharing, whiteboards, PowerPoint, and video. Many of these allow guests to monitor meetings with no or nominal cost.

- Document Sharing – Sending current documents to be posted on the UUA web site by UUA committee staff support sometimes is a barrier. This could be simplified through the use of Google Drive / Google Docs / Dropbox and other simple ways to give a committee direct control of posting their own documents, allowing real time modifications. The Open UUA Committee has been experimenting with these methods.

Request for Direction

1. Setting Expectations – From our survey, we discovered some committees don't think they need to comply because of the confidential nature of their work. Yet there are aspects of a credentialing committee or a grant awarding committee that are not confidential. Should all UUA Committees strive, as best as possible, to comply?

2. A Compliance Timetable – What are reasonable expectations of notices for meetings, distributing agendas, making time for public comment, and distribution of notes/minutes afterward?

3. Role of UUA Staff – What guidelines should the UUA Staff follow to make their work open and transparent? Does the Open UUA Committee have a role?

4. Training and Enforcement – What are the roles for the Open UUA Committee in education, monitoring and enforcement of compliance?

Section C-2.1. Principles.

Rule G-2.1. Democratic Process.

Because the Association is committed to the use of the democratic process, because its governing institutions are accountable to our congregations, because accessibility is critical to countering systemic and institutional oppression and because openness and trust are characteristics of a healthy religious community, the UUA Board shall establish policies to allow for the maximum transparency of its proceedings and of the proceedings of all UUA committees, commissions and task forces, consistent with their effective functioning. These policies shall include:

4. providing advance notice of dates and locations of regular business meetings, and making agendas, reports and minutes available promptly;
5. providing avenues for comment on issues on the meetings' agendas;
6. accommodating observers at regular business meetings, with the exception of executive sessions.

Implementing this rule shall be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. The Board shall designate a specific person or committee to whom comments about adherence to this rule may be addressed. The Board shall report to the General Assembly annually for the next three years on its implementation.

Transparency Guidelines for UUA Committees, Task Forces, Working Groups and the UUA Board of Trustees

May, 2013

Rule G-2.1 of the bylaws of the UUA requires openness in the functioning of the UUA elected and appointed committees and task forces and the UUA Board, including its committees and working groups. These guidelines are intended to assist in fulfilling this requirement. They are prepared by the Open UUA Committee, which was created by the UUA Board to clarify and implement the Rule (see **Charge** below).

The Rule requires that all the UUA Board and all UUA committees and task forces:
> (a) provide advance notice of dates and locations of regular business meetings and make agendas, reports, and minutes available promptly;
> (b) provide avenues for comment on issues on the meetings' agendas;
> (c) accommodate observers at regular business meetings with the exception of executive sessions. [www.uua.org > About Us > Bylaws > Rule II > Rule G-2.1]

Reporting requirement
Any reports by elected committees, and those appointed by the board or administration, shall be posted on the web as part of the board packet or on their committee page.

Web postings
Provide advance notice of meetings by listing them on the UUA's online calendar. To include your event, please go to www.uua.org/events/ and click on "Submit an Event." Then use the web form to provide the basic information about your event.

Agendas, notices, minutes and documents can most easily be provided through the UUA web pages. Just send the information to your committee's staff liaison, who has been trained in how to update the web site. If your committee has no staff liaison, you can send your information directly to the UUA Web Team (web@uua.org). *Do not take action on items not on your agenda, except in an emergency.* The agenda gives notice to people who may wish to comment on potential actions.

One important way to notify the public of your meetings is by posting it on the UUA public calendar (which is a Google calendar). There is a special sub-calendar/Google group called "UUA Committees." Contact Sam Trumbore <Sam.Trumbore@gmail.com> to become a member of this sub-calendar group and post your meetings directly on the UUA calendar.

Information about your committee
It is important to have the charge to your committee on your web page, so that people can know what you do. You must also have an email address where your committee can be reached. It is best to use an address like openness@uua.org that is forwarded to a member of your committee. Just submit the name of your committee and the email address where you want messages sent. This will fulfill (b) above for people not at the meeting.

In-person meetings

If you meet in person, you must accommodate observers. This means that there is space in the meeting room for observers where they can see and hear. Some opportunity to speak must be given on request. The extent of guest participation in the meeting shall be at the discretion of the chair. Executive sessions shall be noted in the agenda, except in case of an emergency matter, and scheduled at the end of meetings whenever possible. You may ask for observers to make reservations so that you know how many need to be accommodated.

Conference call meetings

Meetings by phone shall make provision for observers. Observers will not be reimbursed for the cost of their calls. If you go into executive session for one of the permissible reasons for confidentiality, you may set up a separate conference call to handle those matters. Any non-confidential decisions made during executive session discussions must be noted in a subsequent open meeting.

Meeting evaluations

Include in your meeting evaluations questions about your compliance with the transparency guidelines.

Email lists

It is preferable, but not required, to set up an email list which anyone can join, but where posting is restricted to members of the committee. You may request such a list at web@uua.org. We can provide the settings needed to permit only members to post.

Transparency

The important thing to remember is the motivation for the transparency rule: to keep our members informed and to engage them in the work of the Association. The Open UUA Committee will monitor progress in implementing the Rule, and will report to the UUA Board. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact us at openness@uua.org. You can also find information at our web page: on www.uua.org at the top click About Us > Governance > Committees > Open UU Committee

OPENNESS IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE
Charge adopted October 17, 2004

"The Openness Implementation Committee is charged to clarify and implement the functional application of Rule G-2.1 to the UUA Board and all UUA committees, commissions and task forces. The Committee will:

> a. In collaboration with committee, commission or task force leadership, create a clear, detailed process for each group to establish effective openness practices and policies
> b. Provide a mechanism for congregations and individuals to submit comments about adherence to this policy
> c. Report no less than annually to the Board of Trustees

Open UUA Committee (Name changed in 2010):
Rev. Sam Trumbore (Chair), Jennifer Carver, Cheri Cody, and Dick Jacke