

Board of Trustees

MEETING: January 22-23, 2021

Pursuant to notice duly given, this meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association was held via Zoom conferencing.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Genevieve Baldwin (youth trustee), Greg Boyd, Kathy Burek, Barbara de Leeuw, Charles Du Mond (Co-Moderator), Suzanne Fast, Susan Frederick-Gray (President), Sherman Logan, Patrick McLaughlin, John Newhall, Lucia Santini Field (Financial Advisor), Meg Riley (Co-Moderator), Tom Schade, Rebecca Throop (youth trustee), Bill Young

ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS: Carey McDonald (Recording Secretary & Executive Vice President), Andrew McGeorge (Treasurer), Chris Buice and Danielle Di Bona (chaplains), Stephanie Carey Maron, Brent Lewis, Marcus Fogliano, LaTonya Richardson, Jessica York, Woullard Lett, Chris Chepel, Becky Brooks, Mary Heafy, Laura Conkle, Catherine Ishida, Debra Boyd, Stephanie Samson, Scott May, Susan Howlett, Shelly Rohe, Darrick Jackson, Imari Kariotis

Meeting Minutes

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22

Co-Moderator Meg Riley opened the meeting at 11:00 am, welcomed participants and shared an opening reading.

Consent agenda

The Board unanimously approved the consent agenda, which included the December meeting minutes.

President and Staff Report

President Susan Frederick-Gray shared her reflections on the UUA's work going into 2021. She noted the UUA's commitment invest in organizing UUs for justice and activism to build on the success of the UU the Vote program. This will mean a transition to an ongoing distributed organizing structure for engaging thousands of UU volunteers and leaders, based on the model created through UU the Vote.

Anticipating the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, as vaccines become widely available, President Frederick-Gray said the UUA will update guidance to congregations this spring for planning going into the summer and fall. This will likely include focus on multiplatform operations (a mix of both online and in-person) at the UUA and in congregations. She noted the pandemic is far from over, that there are likely not to be any in-person UUA events scheduled through the remainder of the calendar year, and that staff members continue to face personal challenges, especially those who are parents.

CIMAT update



Executive Vice President Carey McDonald shared an update from the UUA staff Commission on Institutional Change Implementation and Mission Alignment Team (CIMAT). He described the five-stage framework for considering Commission on Institutional Change (COIC) recommendations of discussion, discernment, development, implementation, and monitoring. UUA staff identified 96 commitments and initiatives that were currently in discernment, development or implementation related to the COIC's recommendations, touching all but two of the recommendations from the COIC's Widening the Circle of Concern report. Areas with many projects included religious professionals, living our values, congregations and communities, hospitality and inclusion and educating for liberation. Areas with fewer projects included governance, restoration and reparations, accountability and resources.

EVP McDonald said that the next phase of the CIMAT process is to identify gaps in the recommendations which are not being fully addressed. He noted the UUA is on track for creating an implementation plan by General Assembly 2021, as requested by the COIC report, and will share further updates at the April Board meeting. Discussion with Board members raised the need to make the plan transparent and easily understandable, and to clearly differentiate between one-time projects required for implementation and changes that will take years to fully implement. They also asked how congregations might share their own implementation commitments, perhaps modeled after the UUA's implementation framework.

Financial update

Treasurer Andrew McGeorge shared a financial update which showed that UUA income is trending flat, with modest decreases in congregational giving being balanced by increases in bequests. He noted that expenses are down substantially from budget, some of which has been offset by lower event income. Clarifying that the UUA's Paycheck Protection Program loan is intended to be used to preserve jobs and cover gaps in income, he said the UUA is seeing the first pieces of that this year with an expectation that these income decreases will accelerate into the coming fiscal year, especially from congregational giving.

Board members Tom Schade, Barbara de Leeuw, Rebecca Throop, Kathy Burek, Bill Young, Meg Riley, Greg Boyd agreed to help thank congregations for their contributions to the Annual Program Fund.

Financial Secretary Report

Financial Secretary Kathy Burek's report emphasized that the Board needs to model for committees in its own planning for multiplatform work and virtual meetings going forward. The new mix of in-person and online gatherings could focus in-person time on crucial relationship-building and continuity with new and old Board members while business discussions are still done primarily online, and could involve a better, more inclusive model for the ways adults support youth trustees. Discussion noted that General Assembly is an opportunity time for in-person connection among Board members and more widely between the Board and other UU leaders, but that this connection is hard to prioritize given the amount of business the Board manages at its June meetings.

MFC Rule change

Jackie Clement joined the meeting as co-chair of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) to review the proposed MFC rule change to the number-based



categories for MFC interview decisions. She noted the MFC’s goal of replacing the MFC’s traditional focus on assessment of competency, which is steeped in white supremacy and patriarchy, with deeper feedback and a new system of three decision options which all include counsel from the MFC – affirmed in fellowship, continued in candidacy, or discontinued in candidacy.

Discussion with Board members explored the past impact of the 1-5 categories of MFC decisions, and whether a Category 3 decision where a candidate is not granted fellowship has made those candidates more successful when they return and eventually pass the MFC interview. They discussed the shift of the MFC interview to four core questions around ministerial call, support networks, accountability and learning, a more helpful and inclusive approach than the previous basis of areas of competency. Additional concerns raised by the Board included the ongoing use of the MBTI as a part of the career assessment, and the disposal of files for candidates who leave the formation process.

The meeting took a break from 1:30-2:30 pm.

Audit and Risk Committee Report

Chris Chepel joined the meeting as chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. She reviewed role of committee and recent additions to its charter for risk management, and discussed highlights of UUA financial statements. Recent risk assessments have included cybersecurity, large-scale societal risks like the pandemic, and the emerging risk of failure to implement COIC recommendations or otherwise follow through on workplace commitments to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion. She noted the A&R Committee is currently reviewing and updating the overall risk management matrix.

National Advisory Council

Members of the National Advisory Council (NAC) joined the meeting to discuss their relationship with the Board. They reviewed function of the NAC as coordinating the work of the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) in their ongoing outreach and survey interviews of congregational leaders, and they shared the history of the NAC as evolving from the former District Presidents’ Association and the Regional Leaders Group. NAC members reviewed findings from the past 18 months of outreach to congregational leaders, which included the difficulty in getting responses to make initial contact, but finding them eager to be connected with the UUA when they do engage with RACs. They noted congregational leaders have overwhelmingly reported positive experiences with regional UUA staff, but often only call when there is a problem rather than reaching out proactively.

Jessica York, Director of Congregational Life and liaison to the NAC, submitted a report to the Board to ask the Board to consider what future expectations it has for the NAC and RACs. The report raised the NAC’s three functions, noting the current structure is not achieving any of these because it may be trying to do too much: governance linkage or feedback, building connections among lay leaders, and supporting leadership opportunities. NAC members asked what the “linkage” function from policy governance means in an era of widespread virtual connections.

Discussion with Board members affirmed the need for investing in opportunities for lay leadership development, given the dissolution of many district Boards which had previously worked as leadership development pathways. They agreed on the importance of connection across multiple levels of the UUA. Members noted that



the “linkage” function is happening in other venues, such as the COIC or Article II Study Commission processes. NAC members planned to meet with Board and staff members in the coming weeks to review possibilities for the NAC’s future work.

General Assembly

Conversations on the Future of General Assembly (GA)

Exploring options for GA 2022 and beyond, Board members agreed that future in-person GAs will likely be a blend of online and in-person content, a “multi-platform” mode that builds on the success of virtual GA. Noting that UU congregations will also be considering multi-platform options that preserve the accessibility of online events while providing for meaningful in-person interactions, they highlighted the value of GA as a model to influence congregational operations going forward. GA and Conference Services staff were investigating other multiplatform events in the conference industry, as well as other denominational synods and conferences, and said they would follow up with the Board, administration leaders and the GA Planning Committee with options for multi-platform events. They noted that online meeting technology is changing week to week, so there may be possibilities in the future which cannot be anticipated yet.

GA 202 Planning

Greg Boyd, Board liaison to the GA Planning Committee (GAPC), shared that the GAPC has had further resignations and is currently operating in small groups focused on specific pieces of GA planning. Board members asked about how the GAPC may need to shift going forward to make it a better experience for volunteers, and in order to sustain new multiplatform ideas for the event. Discussion affirmed the changes made this year to the GA planning process involving regular “town hall” meetings with stakeholder and constituent groups to get their input on GA decisions, share events updates, and answer questions.

Board members reviewed ways to engage congregational delegates in the lead up to GA 2021. They affirmed the need for earlier, informal hearings on business items; accessible plain-language versions of the rules and business agenda items; and more and better orientation for delegates to the virtual process

Adjournment

The meeting ended at 4:30 pm, members and participants stayed around to socialize.



SATURDAY, JANUARY 23

Additional Participants: Carey McDonald (Recording Secretary & Executive Vice President), Andrew McGeorge (Treasurer), Chris Buice and Danielle Di Bona (chaplains), Stephanie Carey Maron, Marcus Fogliano, Mary Heafy, Laura Conkle, Stephanie Samson, Debra Boyd, Shelly Rohe, Janette Lallier, Becky Brooks, Cheryl M. Walker, Ed Klein

Opening

Co-Moderator Riley opened the meeting at 11:00 am with a reading, and reviewed changes to the schedule

Article II Study Commission

Becky Brooks and Cheryl M. Walker joined the meeting as co-chairs of the Article II Study Commission (A2SC). They shared that the A2SC is focused on communication and education about their process, stakeholder outreach, developing their timeline and planning for General Assembly. Questions were being developed for UU stakeholder groups (e.g. identity-based, professional and issue-based UU organizations and communities) to provide feedback on their understanding of the UUA mission, heritage, values, covenant. They noted that information is regularly posted on the A2SC web pages on UUA.org, and thanked the Board members who join their regular meetings for their support.

The A2SC had been in conversation with the National Advisory Council on working together to reach out to congregational leaders. A2SC leaders noted they want congregational leaders to be fully engaged, recognizing many are already talking about the proposal for an 8th Principle and need to understand how that relates to the A2SC process.

Discussion noted that if A2SC recommends removing the principles and sources language from the bylaws to create a more theologically-rooted place for them to live, then such a document would need to be created. Members affirmed the importance of making theological commitments that truly embody a truly living tradition, rather than making them feel untouchable or stagnant.

Design Team update

Suzanne Fast gave an update on behalf of the Design Team for the accountability group recommended by the Commission on Institutional Change. With herself and Board member Leslie MacFadyen, she said they are discussing individuals and venues to reach out to to include in the coming months. She noted there is no additional support that they need, that they are focused on building a process that embodies an ethos of collaboration and courage.

“Deep Divers” Bylaw Working Group

Barbara de Leeuw shared an update on behalf of the Deep Divers bylaw working group. She said that the group had reviewed what is included in the UUA bylaws, as well as the history of commissions recommending major changes to the bylaws of the UUA and its predecessors, the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America.

Board members and participants discussed an “Imagine 2035” scenario around possible changes to the selection of the UUA President, asking what actions the



current Board could take or values the Board could promote that would contribute to success in 15 years? Comments included:

- Valuing faithful leadership and calling to the community over a model of meritocracy
- Cultivating the beloved community, where the current model of contested elections forces a focus on divisions rather than aspirations; elections can seem to be about charisma and a popularity contest, not the traits that will make you a good leader
- Promoting collaboration, curiosity, skilled systems analysis, and process awareness.
- Ensuring leaders are highly skilled with a diversity of communication approaches and have a breadth and depth of relational connections
- Emphasizing that fundraising is a key skill!
- Embodying a theological sensibility of how all people are valued
- Noting leaders need to be able to inspire UUs across the Association
- Affirming leaders need to have a foundation of trust that allows the UUA to address systemic trust deficits, noting the bylaws are built on distrust from individualism and trauma, leaders need to have a foundation of trust
- Recognizing that the shorter six-year term means there are more transitions, and it can be harder to sustain trust
- Noting the 2017 presidential candidates did model covenantal relationships in the campaign, but the costs of campaigns to leaders and relationships is high
- Exploring the examples of youth communities that can accomplish quick, deep relationship building



Barbara shared that the Deep Divers group was preparing to recommend changes to the presidential selection process which focused on values of accessibility to the role, flexibility and transparency in the process, full democratic engagement, and leadership continuity over competition. She noted the group is discussing changes around the following items, which will be brought back to the Board as a proposal for consideration at a future meeting:

- Allowing the Presidential Search Committee (PSC) to nominate “one or more” rather than “two or more” candidates
- Considering what role the Board should have in reviewing PSC nominations for leadership continuity
- Setting a later date for nomination and a shorter campaign cycle
- Identifying a later start for President taking office (currently at the close of the GA where elected)
- Explicitly allowing the role of President to include teams (parallel to moderator language)
- Any changes to the petition process to put more focus on the nomination process
- Removing petition option
- If only one nomination is made for President, it must be affirmed by delegates at GA

UU the Vote Budget Change

The proposed \$180,000 increase in spending on the UU the Vote project was unanimously approved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The meeting took a break at 12:30 pm and went into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel issues and conflicts of interest.

OPEN SESSION

The meeting returned at 2:30 pm to review the proposed MFC rule change. In transparency, John Newhall and Greg Boyd noted their conflicts of interest as ministerial aspirants subject to the MFC’s guidelines, and Meg Riley, Sherman Logan, Tom Schade and Patrick McLaughlin noted their conflicts of interest as ministers in fellowship who are accountable to the MFC’s rules. The Board did not determine these conflicts precluded these members from voting.

The rule change was unanimously approved, with Lucia Santini Field abstaining.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board returned to executive session at 2:40 pm to discuss personnel issues and awards, and to check-in on their own learnings related to disability justice.

Closing

The meeting ended at 5:00 pm.



Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Carey McDonald

Recording Secretary