



UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
ASSOCIATION

# Board Basics Webinar

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[uua.org](http://uua.org)



# Board Basics Webinar Outline – Session 1

## Tuesday, May 26th @ 7:00 pm Central Time

### What it means to serve on a Congregational Board

- Why Congregational Boards are Different
- Operational and Strategic Board Continuum
- Types of Governing Boards (Portfolio, Liaison, Operational, Strategic, Policy Governance)
- Relationship with the “Executive”
- Relationship with the Minister
- How Relationships and Roles Change with Board Service
- Role Clarity and how to achieve it
- Five Strategic Tasks of a Board (Introduction)
- Governance Documents
- Board as a Good Employer



## **Board Basics Webinar Outline – Session 2** **July 28<sup>th</sup> @ 7:00 pm Central Time**

### **Technical and Adaptive Skills for Board Service**

- Adaptive challenges vs. Technical Problems
- Balcony vs. Dance Floor
- Differentiation as a Leader
- Confidentiality and Transparency
- Healthy Disclosure (4 part process)
- Linkage
- Board Covenant – Speak with One Voice
- Voting and Consensus Process
- Effective Meetings
- Healthy Conflict for Boards



## **Board Basics Webinar Outline – Session 3** **August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – 7:00pm Central Time**

### **Tools and Techniques for Effective Boards**

- How to read a Congregational Budget and Profit/Loss Statement
- Process Observation
- Consent Agenda
- Board Meeting / Board Workshop
- Powerful Questions
- Cottage Meetings and Townhalls
- Board Culture Assessment
- Board Roles and Positions
- Open/Executive Sessions



## Reminders for this Webinar

- Use the chat box to ask questions during the presentation
- The slide deck is designed with both graphics and notes
- The slide deck will be sent out as a PDF file after the webinar
- When sharing stories or questions, remember your commitments to confidentiality (this is not a confidential space)
- This webinar is being recorded and will be available on the web
- Presenters are available outside of webinar







## Underlying Assumptions of this Webinar



- The purpose of Church is not Governance – the Purpose of Church is the congregation’s mission. Governance is good when it is serving the mission.
- Culture is stronger than Structure. Unless you change the congregational culture, structural changes will not shift a congregational system.
- The most effective way to make changes in a congregational system is for individuals to change their own functioning. The congregation will adapt around these intentional changes.
- There is no single “right” way for a Congregational Governing Board to function!
- There is no such thing as Best Practices. There are ideas that may or may not work in your system, and you don’t know till you really try them.



# Congregational Boards are Different! (Than other kinds of Boards)

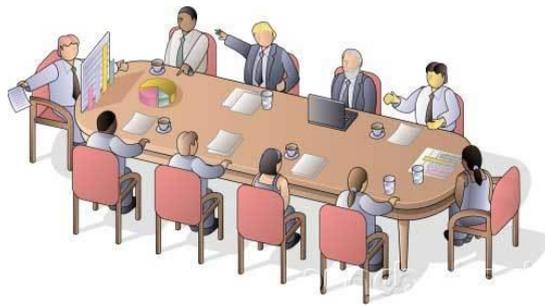




# Congregational Boards are Different!



- Experience on a Non-Profit or Corporate Board is not always helpful
  - Different level of policy development
  - Different form of linkage (connection)
  - Congregational Board Role Confusion
  - Different relationship with the Executive
- Congregational Boards are different in “kind” from other Boards
  - Board members have a covenantal relationship as members of the congregation
  - The minister is a full Board Member, with or without voting rights
    - Ex-officio does not mean “not really a Board Member”
  - Higher level of responsibility and accountability to congregational membership
  - Board members are fully integrated in the life of the church, as are their families
  - Board members often have multiple other leadership roles





# Governance Levels: How we make Decisions Together

## Governance Level 1

- Congregational Polity is the operative system
- Created by foundational documents
- Congregational Meeting is the main expression
- All members have direct voice and vote

## Governance Level 2

- Created by the Congregational Bylaws
- Congregational Board is the main expression
- Several possible governance theories as operational system
- Operates as somewhere between a delegative or representative body

## Governance Level 3

- Created by the Congregational Board through policy
- All of the operations of the congregation
- Sometimes it is the Board directly
- Several different operative systems
- Operational



# Governance Documents





## Governance Documents



### Bylaws / Constitution -- Green Bowl

- Create the “Outer Structure” of the institution
- Design the relationship between Board and Congregation
- Can only be altered by a vote of the congregation
- Define the parts of the congregation directly accountable to the congregation

### Governing Policies – Yellow Bowl

- Create the structural relationships between the Board and the Congregational Structure
- Often include Board Policy, Committee Charters, and the relationship between the Board and Executive
- Can be altered by a vote of the Board
- Define accountability to the Board



## Governance Documents



### Operational Policies – Blue Bowl

- Promulgated by the Board, but may be drafted by others (Executive, Task Force, Committees)
- Define the “What we do” of Congregational Life
- Apply to the whole of the Congregation
- Are usually about aspects of congregational operations

### Procedures – Red Bowl

- Are drafted by those responsible for implementing a policy or ministry of the congregation
- May be adapted by those who implement policy or ministry
- Are how congregation’s capture and pass on institutional wisdom
- The Governing Board does not approve, but oversees that they are within policy



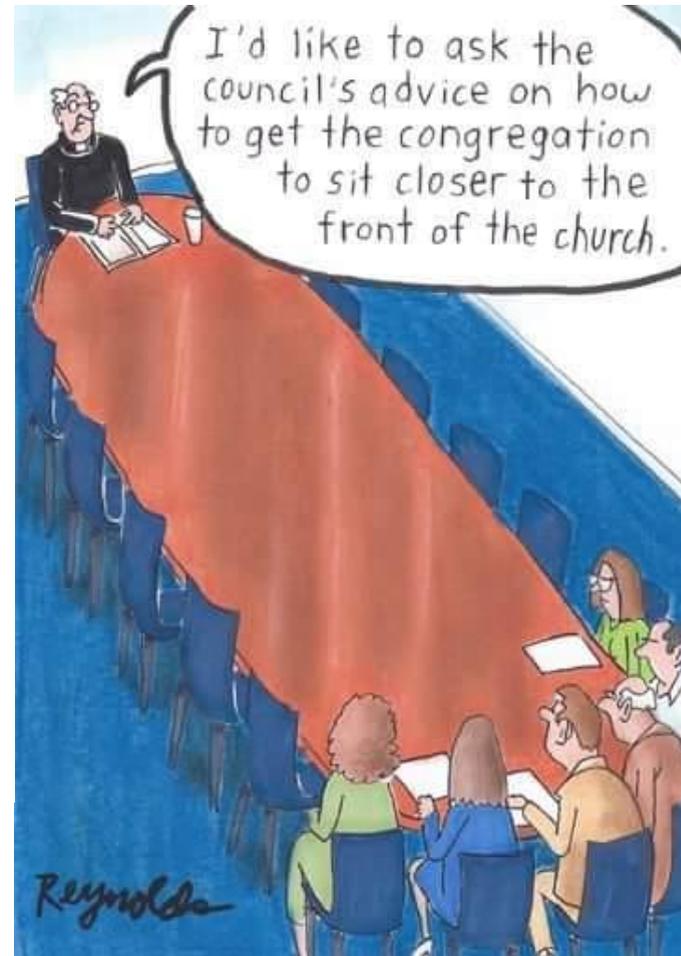
## Continuum of Congregational Boards

- Operational
  - Operational Board – The Board makes all decisions that relate to program and money
  - Managing Board – The Board makes all decisions that are outside of specific program areas
- Hybrid
  - Portfolio Board – Board members serve as Committee Chairs
  - Liaison Board – Board members serve as liaisons to committees
- Strategic
  - Strategic Board – Board focuses on the 5 strategic tasks, operational authority lies elsewhere (usually the staff, lay-council, or an executive team)
  - Policy Governance Board – Board focuses on 5 strategic tasks, provides a policy structure to set limitations upon the Executive/Operational authority





## Relationship with the Executive





## Relationship with the “Executive”

- There is no one answer to who fulfills Executive Functions in UU Congregations
  - The Board may be both Governance and Executive
  - The Minister may be the Executive
  - There may be a lay/professional team as the Executive
  - The Board/Congregational President/Chair may be the Executive
  - A long time “Elder” member may informally serve as the Executive
  - A Program Council or Operational Second Board may serve as the Executive
  - Executive functions may shift in the congregation depending on the issue or circumstance, or by formal or informal delegation
- It is not a question of which is “right” but rather a question of whether it works or not for your congregation to best live its vision and mission
- The more formal the Executive, the greater the Accountability



## Relationship with the Minister (if your congregation has one)





## Relationship with the Minister (If your congregation has one)

- There is a different relationship between ministers and congregations based upon the congregation's bylaws, governance system, and the nature of the ministry
  - Many bylaws make the minister an “Ex-Officio” Board Member, voting and non-voting
  - In some bylaws, the minister is not a Board Member, but supports the Board as Staff
  - Some bylaws define a clear separation between the Board and the Minister
- When Ex-Officio, Minister is both Board Member and Clergy
  - Challenge for pastoral Care during Board Conflict
- It sometimes matters if the minister is “called” or “contract”
  - Called ministers are directly accountable to the congregation
  - Contract Ministers are directly accountable to the Governing Board
- Because of this complexity, many Boards “Covenant” with their ministers
  - Define specific roles, expectations, and responsibilities in the relationship





# How Relationships and Roles Change with Board Service





## How Relationships and Roles Change with Board Service



- People begin to see you through the lens of Congregational Leadership as well as Membership
- Some fellow congregants may have expectations of you that you are not aware of, if they feel you share a commitment to something in the congregation
- Some fellow congregants may begin to view you through whatever lens they view the Governing Board
- You will now be included in information which is appropriately confidential, and that can shift your relationships
- You are now a Religious Leader in your congregation and in your community
- The UUA Regional Staff has a more formal relationship with you now



## Role Clarity and How to Achieve it

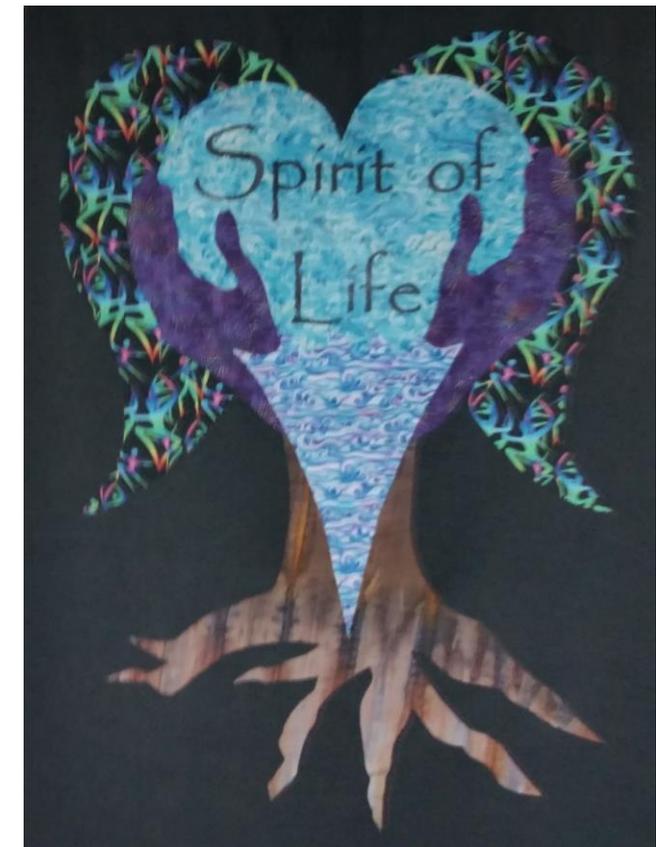


- Role Clarity is remembering the limits and expectations of the role you are in within the congregation's life at any particular time, and stay to the role that is appropriate in that moment
- When you are functioning as an RE Teacher, be an RE Teacher (not a Board Member working in RE)
- When you are functioning as a Board member, be a Board Member (not an RE Teacher sitting on the Board)
- Strive to shift the lens through which you view the congregation and function within the congregation
- Be aware when others are confused about your role, and help them to help you maintain role clarity
- This is the most difficult part of being a congregational Board member!



## Introducing the 7 Practices of Board Leadership

- Discerning the congregation's Mission and Vision
- Holding the Fiduciary Responsibility
- Capturing institutional wisdom by Generating Policy
- Assessing the Health of the Congregation
- Planning for the Congregation's Future
- Building and Maintaining Relationships
- Transforming the Congregational Culture





## Mission and Vision Discernment



- Discern the Vision of the Congregation
    - *Who do we want to be /  
What do we want the world to be?*
  - Discern the Mission of the Congregation
    - *What parts of the vision can we best help create  
right now?*
- Vision Discernment takes deep listening to the  
congregation – there are already Implicit Visions in every  
congregation.*



## Fiduciary Responsibility

- A Governing Board's Fiduciary Responsibility is to ensure that all of the resources and assets of the congregation are used to achieve and fulfill the congregation's mission
- The assets and resources of a congregation are far more than money
- Looking for the "Sweet Spot" between faithful stewardship of the congregation's resources and utilizing those resources for the fulfillment of the mission
- When Fiduciary responsibility is not tied to fulfilling the mission and vision, it can too often become an oppressive form of control within a congregation





## Policy Generation

- Policy Generation is about capturing Institutional Wisdom
- Policy says “What We Do”
- Good policy can come from both within and beyond the congregation
- Key is to keep all the congregation’s policies in the same place and the same format, and to review it regularly





## Assessment

- In order to know where we should and can go, Congregational Boards must assess where we have been
- It is the Board's task to Assess the health and vitality of the Congregation in its wholeness –not just certain parts of it
- Board must also regularly assess its own functioning and relationships





## Planning for the Future



- Strategic Planning is explicitly naming the congregation's intentions to fulfill the mission over the short term of 3-5 years
- Long Range Planning is the congregations intentions to fulfill the vision over the next 5-25 years



## Relationship Building and Maintaining

- Building and Maintaining relationships as a Governing Board, not just as individuals
- Relationships within and beyond the congregation
- Think of anyone or any group invested in the success of the congregation and its mission
- Relationships are for partnering, learning, and accountability





## Transformation



- Transformation is the Practice that relies on all the other Practices of Board Leadership
- To change, not just be better at being what we are
- The congregational governing board as the agent of change



## Board as Good Employer





## Key Things to Know as an Employer

- Every Congregation should have an Employee and Volunteer Handbook
  - Determines basic policies around treatment of employees
  - Outlines a grievance procedure
  - Volunteer handbooks spell out expectations of volunteers
- Every Employee should have an up-to-date job description
  - Forms a basis for evaluation and supervision
  - Review them annually for updates and changes
  - Can this be realistically accomplished in the hours to be worked?
  - Professional development should be part of the job description
- Employees should be supervised by an individual not a committee
  - Avoids conflict amongst the committee and confusion
  - Allows for clear lines of accountability





## Key Things to Know as an Employer

- Evaluation should happen yearly
  - Allows an opportunity to set yearly goals, update the job description
  - Takes away the punitive attitude towards evaluations
- Employees should be fairly compensated
  - The UUA provides guidelines for fair compensation for many typical positions
  - Benefits should be provided for anyone at least half-time
  - This is a justice issue.
- State Laws vary in programs you can/cannot participate in
  - Most states prohibit or restrict participation in unemployment programs
  - Workers Compensation typically is required.
  - You need to consider this with severance pay policies
- Employment of Ministers has special rules
  - Federal laws govern minister employment including housing allowances
  - Not all payroll services understand these rules, make sure they are up to speed!





## Resources for Employers

The UUA Office of Church Staff and Finances has Resources

- Starting to Parting document
- Compensation and Staffing News email
- Onboarding Checklist
- Benefit programs congregations can take advantage of
- Sample Personnel Policy Manual/Employee handbook
- Responsible staffing for safety - interviews, background checks, reference checking
- Compensation Consultants can help with fair compensation



[www.uua.org/careers/congregations](http://www.uua.org/careers/congregations)



## UUA Leader Lab – 12 Part Board Training Program

[www.uua.org/leadership/programs/board-training](http://www.uua.org/leadership/programs/board-training)

- Call of Duty: Governance Basics
- In the Room Where it Happens: Why we have Meetings
- Finding Your Center: Spiritual Grounding As Leaders
- Knowing your Purpose: Leading in Alignment with Your Mission
- The Myth of Rationality: Understanding Human Nature
- In the Wilderness: Change is Hard, Even if it's the Promised Land
- Good Boundaries: Balancing Transparency and Confidentiality
- From “Me” to “We”: Healthy Communications
- Who’s the Boss? Board as Employer
- Guarding the Institution: Balancing Stability and Vision
- A Strategic Partnership: Governance and Ministry
- Staying in my Lane: Governance Roles and Responsibilities



## Resources

- “Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership” by Dan Hotchkiss
- “Boards the Make a Difference” by John Carver
- “Healthy Disclosure: Solving Communications Quandries in Congregations” by Kibbie Simmons Ruth and Karen A. McClintock
- “High-Impact Church Boards: How to Develop Healthy, Intentional, and Empowered Church Leaders” by TJ Addington
- “The Effective Church Board” by Michael Anthony
- MidAmerica Webinar Library -- <https://www.uua.org/midamerica/events/webinars>
- Leaderlab -- <https://www.uua.org/leadership>
- UU Leadership Institute – [www.uuinstitutue.org](http://www.uuinstitutue.org)
- Your MidAmerica Primary Contact!



## And if you do not know your Congregation's Primary MidAmerica Staff Contact

