

## **Bylaws Renewal Team Update**

Update & Conversation about Scope September 13, 2024

# Agenda (in the form of questions)

- How did we get to this point?
- What are the current plans of the Bylaws Renewal Team?
- What should be the scope of our work?

# How did we get to this point?

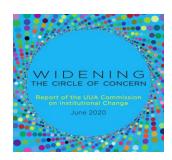
#### A brief timeline

#### Studies and Reports:

- Commission on Governance (1993)
- Fifth Principle Task Force (2009)
- Strengthening Governance Working Group (2014)
- Task Force on Reimagining Covenant (2017)
- Pres Search Committee Report (2018)
- Widening the Circle of Concern, by the Commission on Institutional Change (2020).

#### Actions and Inactions:

- Districts phased out as governance units (2009-2012)
- Presidential Search Committee (2010)
- Board size reduced and all members elected at large (2012)
- Board considers, but chooses not on act, on Commission on Appraisal (2014-15)
- GA Planning Committee transitions from governance role (2017-present).



### **Stimulating Quotations**

The unnecessary complexity of the current UU governance structured is biased toward the more privileged, who have the time and resources for extensive volunteerism."

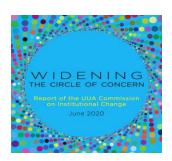
"We still too often confuse social customs among us with theology."

"Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color encounter ignorance and aggression in many UU organizations, and the lack of a common commitment to antioppression and cultural work makes such service hazardous."

"In the effort to bring about the Beloved Community, we often err on the side of the individual as the primary agent of change over and against systemic change."



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#### **More Stimulating Quotations**

"GA is not really democratic in that delegates are neither representative of their congregations, other than being members, nor are they accountable to them.

GA is economically discriminator and therefore generationally discriminatory."

"The UUA has too many organizations with disparate leadership, which makes the kind of change needed difficult and slow."

"Misconceptions about the nature of our congregational polity should be addressed as they are used to maintain a stagnant and exclusionary status quo."



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### **Since 2020:**

2020-21: Bylaws Renewal Team ("deep divers") identifies stress points and common themes:

2021-22: Board discussion and outreach to approximately 100 leaders.

2022 GA resolution as mandate for change.

2022-23: Bylaws Renewal Team adds three non-board members. Team also includes non-board members who had joined when they were board members.

2023-24: Bylaws Renewal Team reconstitutes and gives update at 2024 GA

# What are the current plans of the Bylaws Renewal Team?

### **Timeline**

- Fall/Winter 2024: reach out to stakeholders / communication
- Winter 2025: specific proposals / communication
- Spring 2025" Communicate and consult broadly about the proposals
- GA Vote 2025

# Scope

We are addressing ALL of the stress points and improvement opportunities, including the big ones that have been identified for decades and are most likely to be controversial

# What should be the scope of our work?

# **Current Scope**

- We are looking at all of the stress points and improvements opportunities identified in past work
- We recognize some proposals may not be viewed favorably by all Unitarian Universalists
- We believe it is our responsibility to address the long-term systemic issues that impede the achievement of our mission

# Values embedded in proposed Governance changes:

- Interdependence over individualism
- Trusting leadership over fear of authority
- Ending the centering of white culture
- Freedom to act over risk avoidance
- Strategy, objectives, and plans over monitoring and oversight
- Clarity and simplicity over complexity
- Decisions located organizationally based on importance to mission

# Guidelines for deciding who makes the decision:

- Its relative importance to the future of Unitarian Universalism
- Engagement/inclusion of marginalized groups / decentering white culture
- The level of knowledge desired and available to make the decision
- Accountability/consequences for the decision

### Governance Vision: Roles & Responsibilities

General Assembly

- Responsible for Mission, Vision & Values of UUA
- Lateral communication and support among congregations
- Deep thinking about current & future
- Programing for participants
- Elected by congregation proportionate to membership (imperfectly), with voice for identity groups
- Should identify groups have a more formal voice or vote?
- Elects President (currently)
- Elects Board of Trustees
- Should it elect any committees other than the Nominating Committee

**Board of Trustees** 

President

Identity Groups

#### Accountable to Mission, Vision, & Values of UUA

- Fiduciary on behalf of congregations
- Adopts strategy, policy, and budget on recommendation of President
- Overview of governance effectiveness and accountability; also establishes rules and procedures for governance work
- Thought partner with president
- Should it nominate candidate(s) for President ?
- Assesses performance of President
- Should it appoint Moderator and Financial Advisor?
- · Appoints committees as needed
- Elected by General Assembly (imperfectly)

- Speaks on behalf of the Association
- Articulates mission and vision within UUA
- Recommends strategies, budget and policies to implement Mission and Priorities of Association to Board for approval
- Manages service delivery
- Accountable to Board of Trustees and elected by General Assembly

- Voices not heard sufficiently through congregations
- Needs not sufficiently fulfilled by congregations
- Sources of leadership
- Voice and influence especially at General Assembly
- Accountability partners
- Recognized by Board of Trustees but independent of the UUA
- Does not include service groups such as UUSC and theological schools or groups with adequate GA representation such as religious professionals..

#### **Governance Vision: Documents**

Bylaws

- Articulate core governance principles and structures such as roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of congregations, GA, board, and president.
- Adopted and amended by the General Assembly

Rules

- Describe process for adoption and implementation of strategy, policy, and budget on recommendation of president
- Adopted by Board of Trustees

Committee Charges/ Charters

- Describe roles of volunteer groups or committees established by Board of Trustees
- Adopted by Board of Trustees
- Rules and procedures adopted by Committee's themselves to facilitate their work

# In the view of the Bylaws Renewal Team:

All of these questions are inter-related and should be addressed systematically

### The administraton asks:

After the intensity of Article II, "given the stressors congregations and the Association face in the immediate future and the fractious tenor of this election season" is the system ready for a conversation about the biggest issues?"

# The Board's job:

What **should** be the scope of our work?

### One way to look at choices:

Comprehensive

- Role and representation in General Assembly, especially voice for identity groups
- Choosing President, Moderator, and Financial Advisor
- Limited elected committees
- Sorting by bylaws, rules, and committee charges

Moderate

- Limited elected committees
- Choosing Financial Advisor
- Sorting by bylaws, rules, and committee charges



- Sunset two elected committees (GPAC, CSW)
- Sort by bylaws, rules, and committee charges

# **Conversation and decision making!**