



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?

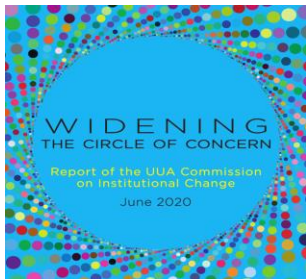
A brief timeline

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 to 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."

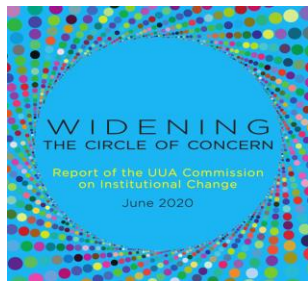
"We still too often confuse social customs among us with theology."

"Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color encounter ignorance and aggression in many UU organizations, and the lack of a common commitment to anti-oppression 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."

 uua.org





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."



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

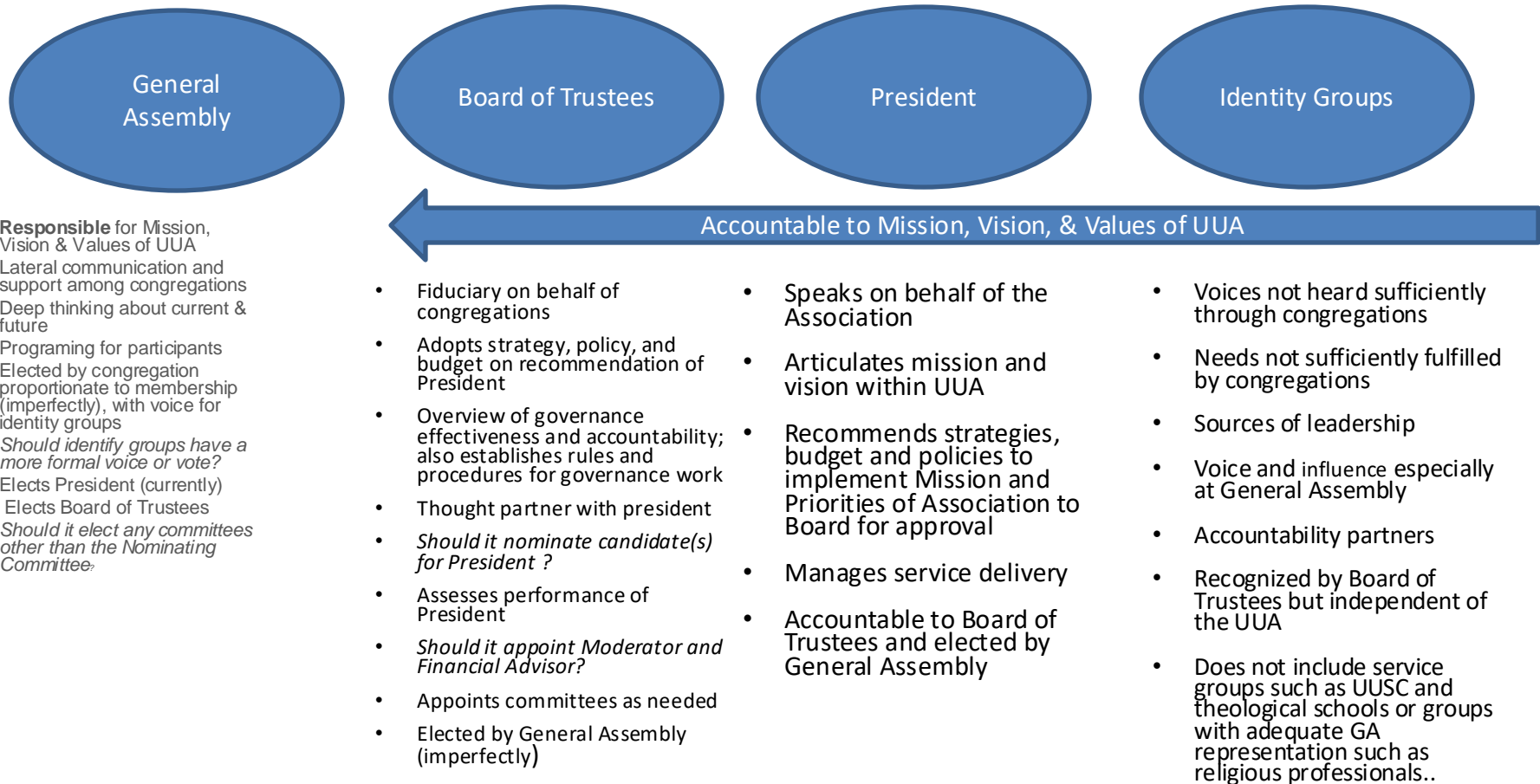
Values embedded in proposed Governance changes:

- 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



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 administrator 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



Tidiness

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

Conversation and decision making!