

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS 2005 BOARD OF TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of the UUA. The 2004-2005 Board was comprised of 20 District Trustees elected by each District and four at-large including one youth trustee who are elected by delegates to the General Assembly (GA). Delegates to the GA also elect the President and the Financial Advisor, who participate in all Board meetings, and the Moderator, who chairs the Board. This year's youth observer, who was elected by his peers at the GA Youth Caucus, has been Julian Sharp.

The Board meets four times a year, three times in Boston and once in conjunction with GA. Much of the Board's work is carried out in working groups, where issues are analyzed and motions framed for presentation to the Board as a whole. These groups, which reflect the purposes of the association as stated in UUA bylaws are Our Congregations, Growth, Living Our Faith, and Our Association. The working groups generally meet on the first day of our three-day meetings, as needed throughout our time together, and by e-mail between meetings, to develop their reports and recommendations.

Full reports of each Board meeting are available on-line at www.uua.org/TRUS on the UUA website as are board agenda and many Board committee reports. Much of the Board's work is described in other reports and business items and consequently not all actions are included in this report.

An Evolving Board

The Board strives to be a dynamic, evolving, learning organization as we seek to serve our association of faith communities. The Board sets aside blocks of time to discuss topics that affect Board and Association functioning as a whole, with a special attention to the alignment of vision, mission, and ministry. This past year we devoted considerable time outside of the formal agenda reflecting upon our role as a board within a faith community, discerning what we consider our vision, mission, and ministry to be. We developed a statement of call, which begins as follows: "We, the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association, are called to lead our Association of faith communities through a web of independence and interdependence to deeper spiritual awareness, to nurture ways and means for living our faith in the world, and the promise that the many might become and be one." The ways we seek to fulfill our call include acknowledging the primacy of congregations and the importance of fostering their health; developing professional and lay leadership; acting as agents of change through frequent examination and renewal of our vision, mission, and ministry; and being prudent stewards of our human and financial resources.

The Board is committed to achieving openness that will enhance trust, right relationship, and accountability within the UUA. We continue to seek ways to increase our own transparency and strongly encourage all committees to operate openly. To implement the 2004 GA vote requiring the Board to establish policies to allow for maximum transparency of its proceedings and those of all UUA committees, the Board appointed an Openness Implementation Committee charged with clarifying processes for establishing effective openness policies and practices. In keeping with our commitment to openness, the Board publishes its agenda preceding each of its meetings, welcomes observers, and posts meeting notes on the Board website soon after each meeting. The president of the District Presidents Association (DPA) has served as a scribe in recent years and we thank Connie Haas Zuber for fulfilling that demanding role in the past year. The Board welcomes suggestions from all sources on what we are doing well and how we might improve in this area.

The Board has established a Best Practices Committee whose charge is to help the Board evaluate its processes and suggest strategies that might help us function more effectively. The Committee also serves as a clearinghouse for tasks or issues for which Working Group

responsibility is unclear in which case it recommends either assignment to an existing Working Group or the formation of a new committee or task force to address the concern. At our most recent meeting the Best Practices Committee recommended ways to ensure follow up on reports or recommendations, posed questions about how the Board might choose to govern itself, and agreed to develop a template for “statements of work” that would clarify what, when, at what cost, and by whom the work of new committees and task forces would be carried out.

Every five years the Board reviews its policies and practices and votes on recommended changes. In 2005 policy amendments and changes related to the roles of first and second vice moderators, the Board’s commitment to Association fundraising, reaffirmation of the Board’s commitment to anti-racism work, policies on meeting attendance and reimbursement for non-board members, recommendations for removal of committee members, and the Moderator’s power to appoint special committees.

The Board continues to examine models of governance and explore whether we need to and how we might use alternative methods to conduct our business. Although we are making no commitment to adopt policy governance, we voted to send the Moderator, two Trustees, and two representatives of the UUA administration to a conference on policy governance to gain a better understanding of this approach and how it might inform our management methods.

Relationships with Districts and Congregations

The UUA is an association of congregations and its purposes include serving the needs of member congregations. As we did in 2004 the Board voted to reimburse the registration for congregational presidents or chairs who attend the 2005 GA in Fort Worth as delegates. At the 2004 GA in Long Beach the Board participated in a meeting of more than 300 enthusiastic congregational presidents convened by President Sinkford and Moderator Courter. We look forward with great anticipation to an even better meeting in Fort Worth. These meetings provide the Board, as elected national leaders, with the opportunity to strengthen our connections with the leaders of the congregations that comprise our Association and, most importantly, learn their priorities and concerns.

The Board continues to strengthen its relationship with the District Presidents Association. District Presidents can be viewed as intermediaries between congregations and national-level activities. As such they share the hopes and concerns of the congregations within their districts and translate these discussions into a broader vision of how we might be in association with one another. The Board has invited the District Presidents to join Board members and selected staff while we are at General Assembly to reflect upon how districts support the alignment of vision, mission, and ministry and contribute to the growth and vitality of congregations in their search for justice, truth, and meaning. This follows a similar gathering hosted by the DPA held in conjunction with the 2004 GA in Long Beach.

Living Our Faith

Becoming anti-racist, anti-oppressive and multiculturally competent (AR/AO/MC) across the entire Association continues to be a high priority for the Board. At its October 2004 meeting the Board gathered a day early to participate in an AR/AO/MC consultation that focused on the systemic implications of our justice work in this area. All Board members and all Board-appointed committee members are expected to participate in AR/AO/MC training. An AR/AO/MC training will be offered immediately following the 2005 GA for Board and committee members who have not already participated in such a training.

The Board received an interim report with recommendations from the Accessibilities Committee, including a review of progress made to date and areas of concern. The Committee will meet with the Board in October to discuss its findings and recommendations. The Board is committed to removing barriers to participation of persons with disabilities and includes in its meeting notices a

description of accessibility to its meetings and procedures by which individuals can make requests to meet special needs.

The Board spent considerable time reviewing recommendations of a panel charged with reviewing the social witness process. The panel was formed in response to charges that the current process is confusing, complex, and time-consuming. The panel's recommendations aimed to increase congregational participation in identifying study action items, streamline the approval process, bring clearer focus to our public witness work through the use of new public policy statements, and provide additional time for implementation. The current process is spelled out in considerable detail in the Association's bylaws. The Board noted that many of the panel's recommended changes would require, at a minimum, a two-year process of bylaw amendment. The Commission on Social Witness offered a response to the panel's recommendations, endorsing many but not all of its recommendations. The Board concluded that implementation of the panel's recommendations in total would be premature, believing that the panel's review had already encouraged greater sensitivity and reforms related to the concerns that had prompted the review. The proposal for creating Public Policy Statements, which would allow consolidation of UUA positions articulated by several General Assemblies, and allow the Board to craft statements around emergent issues grounded in previously passed GA statements, was approved. The Board will continue at its fall meeting this search for effective means to support our congregations' efforts to become justice-seeking religious institutions.

The Board adopted a vision statement that articulates our commitment to the Association's international work. This statement aims to energize and strengthen congregations' connections to international engagement and partnership as a source of spiritual deepening and growth.

The Board approved a policy relating to adults working with children, youth and adults and youth behavior standards, calling upon staff to create safety and ethics policies for Association-sponsored events and conferences. The Board also approved a report on guidelines for responsible staffing that enumerates screening procedures for making our congregations and other UUA organizations safe for children, youth, and vulnerable adults when adding clergy, professional leaders, staff, and volunteers.

The Board had the opportunity to review the draft report of the Commission on Appraisal, which seeks to identify what unifies us in our diversity and met with the Commission chair for a conversation about the Commission's findings and recommendations. The final report will be available at the 2005 GA.

At the request of the Information Technology and Electronic Communications committee the Board affirmed a vision statement that foresees routine collaboration among congregations and those who serve them, using integrated, easy-to-use channels that the Association builds and maintains to grow healthy congregations that promote Unitarian Universalism in the world.

Being Prudent Stewards

The Finance Committee of the Board meets prior to each full Board meeting and provides reports and recommendations to the Board at each of its meetings.

The Board voted to continue to operate Beacon Press under the criteria established three years ago. Income continues to exceed expectations. We were reminded, however, that the Press, similar to all publishing enterprises, continues to be a financial risk.

Following the successful completion of the Association's Campaign for Unitarian Universalism, the Association is now preparing to embark on the largest capital campaign in Association history. The Stewardship and Development group is conducting a series of focus groups with stakeholders and in January met with the Board of Trustees.

The Board approved investment policies and guidelines presented by the Committee on Socially Responsible Investing (CSRI) to ensure that our resources are invested in a way that reflects our values. These guidelines are available on the UUA website for viewing by congregations interested in applying these guidelines to their own portfolios. Upon receipt of the CSRI report, the Board acknowledged that the Investment Committee, in light of its fiduciary responsibility, must balance risks and returns on capital with social responsibility. Achieving this balance will require a planned, multi-year strategy. Consequently the Board requested that the Investment Committee provide an overall strategy and timeline for implementation of the guidelines and an implementation plan including risks, issues, and assumptions at the Board's October 2005 meeting.

The Board approved the salary range recommendations for 2006-2007 presented by the Compensation, Benefits, and Pension Committee. These recommendations are based on feedback from district compensation consultants, a survey of a sampling of congregations, clergy salary data from other denominations, data from other not-for-profit organizations, and opinions from the UUMA Executive Committee.

In 2003 the Board authorized the establishment of an Audit Committee as a committee of the Board. In 2005 the Board approved the charter of that committee and upon their recommendation, selected KPMG, a firm with a strong not-for-profit practice, to be the Association's audit firm, beginning with the fiscal year 2005 audit.

In Conclusion

Every two years the terms of some trustees end and new trustees arrive to take their place. We bade farewell to Katherine McIntyre, Trustee elected by St. Lawrence District; Judi McGavin, Trustee elected by Pacific Northwest District, Calvin Dame, Trustee elected by Northeast District; Wayne Arnason, Trustee-at-large and Board secretary; and the Board's first Youth Trustee, Megan Dowdell. The vitality, vision, commitment, and wit they brought to the Board will be missed. We also bid adieu to Larry Ladd, Financial Advisor, whose informative history lessons will be missed as much as his financial expertise. We look forward to a new cohort of members who will bring their special talents and commitment to the work of our community.

We cannot end our report without acknowledging the excellent support we receive from Executive Vice President Kay Montgomery and Nancy Lawrence, Assistant to the Executive Vice President. They ensure that we have the essentials for doing our work with intelligence and good humor, grounded in years of service to the Association.

This report briefly highlights some of the issues the Board addressed during the past year. We welcome your comments and questions, both at General Assembly and throughout the year, and hope that you will stay informed through frequent visits to our website.

Reports from the Ministerial Fellowship and Religious Education Credentialing Committee

The Board of Trustees appoints a committee responsible for credentialing our professional ministers and a committee responsible for credentialing directors of religious education. These committees' reports follow the Board annual report.

The Rev. Wayne B. Arnason, Secretary

Eva Marx, Assistant Secretary