

UUA Board Meeting – October 2009

The UUA Board meeting started with a retreat for the new Trustees and continued into meetings of the Working Groups and Board Committees.

The Board meeting started on Friday, I arrived during the presentation by the policy governance consultant that had been working with the Board since 2005.

After the meeting, I met briefly with Gini Courter, John Blevins (trustee-Prairie Star) and Linda Laskowski (trustee – Pacific Central). We started discussing the meeting of the District Presidents and selected UUA Board Trustees, and decided that we would meet over lunch on Saturday to plan the DPA agenda.

Saturday's meeting began with Peter Morales' report to the Board. Here are the highlights:

- Added a new Vice President for Programming-Rev. Harlan Limpert
- Major transition in ministry which the UUA is trying to address, regarding demographic changes and the fact that many of our current ministers will be retiring in the next few years. What should our ministry look like in 20 years? The UUA is focused on making our ministry more multi-cultural and entrepreneurial. The UUA staff will be conducting a year-long study but the process will be open. They will look at other work that is already being done in our congregations.
- Growth: shift in focus in working with our leading congregations, how can we partner with them? Leverage the power, engage them in a way that doesn't have too much structure. Follow-up to Louisville conference.
- Public Witness: build on a solid foundation set by Bill Sinkford. Working with DC office in lobbying effort on immigration reform, health care debate. Set up a studio at 25 Beacon to quickly produce 60 second spots.
- Frustrations with web site. Starting to re-format that, with modest changes in place by 2/1. Will be worked on in pieces, with increased functionality by General Assembly.
- Youth and Young Adult Task Force Coordinator ½ time position. New advisory committee in process. Help our congregations become more multi-generational with ministry to all ages. A lot of concern by Trustees that YRUU dismantled without a structure in to replace it.

Tim Brennan presented the Treasurer's Report. FY 2009 and audit-final report in process. Loss of 29 million in net assets. Basically broke even in operating revenue vs expenses. Common Endowment Fund has come back up but not to previous levels (18% YTD).

RFP for retirement plans. Fidelity (current vendor) plan needs to be updated. TIAA-Cref is also being considered. Process is well along. Committee will have a report for Board in January. Budget will be ready for adoption at April meeting.

Budget v Actuals for this FY-right on budget for this year. Peter has asked every staff member to look

at their budgets and identify 25% reductions. Cut training for a year, no raises. Will continue to be tight through 2011 because endowment will still be down.

Tim's goals for this year:

Revise Chart of Accounts

Implementing budgeting software

Retirement plan selection process

UU Common Endowment Fund-improve quarterly reporting

Improve building security procedures.

Financial Advisor Dan Brody reported on the current state of APF, establishing an Endowment spending policy, a Health Insurance Policy, Retirement Plan, conflict of interest & whistle blower policies

Chair of the Monitoring Working Group, John Blevins reported on their work in the Board's move to policy governance. What level of reporting does the Board want to see from UUA staff?

Discussion between Board and staff regarding level of work to revise reporting structures. All admit they are in a learning curve.

The Board discussed the current state of youth leadership in the denomination.

Where is the voice of youth in our national movement? YRUU was managed by an office at UUA, and staffed by some youth. They worked through this youth office but they had no relationship to management at 25 Beacon. Call for new youth leadership structure, lines of accountability to UUA management and youth it served. Since some of the Board's policies are based in the value of the voice of youth in our national movement, there was discussion around how best to gather information before the next Board meeting in January. They considered setting up a three month task force.

Other Working Groups reported in:

Governance

Linkage

Partnerships & Alliances

Excellence in Ministry

Congregations

Committee & Liaison Reports

AR/AO/MC-what is the followup from Excellence on Ministry Summit?

Finance Committee-most decisions now reside with staff (operations)

GA Planning Committee-No UU University this year; all programming will be scheduled in the first two days, last two days just Plenary.

UUSC/UUA-discussion between both groups to decide shared mission and work. Crisis work to move people from victims to actors (3 disasters; Tsunami/Katrina/Pakistan earthquake) Katrina-UUA and UUSC responded and worked together. UUSC has responsibility for international work, so Katrina was unique.

Look for marginalized groups to help, first task would be to identify them, help them to access aid and work with them afterwards. Those people who were marginalized before the disaster will be invisible after the disaster. Disasters can open political space for change.

Eye to eye partnership

Expertise in identifying marginalized groups and need
Get relief to those left out
Move those affected from victim to actor.

Finance Committee Budget Discussion-does the Board, under Policy Governance vote on the staff's recommendation to increase APF by \$2?

Governance & Linkage Working Groups

Trustee Reports back to the Districts will look very different from the ones in the past. These reports will deal with monitoring and linking with sources of authority (congregations) and UUA Staff. The Districts are used to operational updates, UUA staff could now prepare a "talking point list" for Trustees to distribute to the "owners" & "customers".

Importance of linkage-getting the "customers" away from the thought of what they want from the UUA and focused more on what difference they want to make in the world. Help them understand their source of authority. Lift up important pieces that link the District to other important work by UU's.

"Making changes to serve the movement better than we have before." supporting the President to set priorities.

What did the Board expect to gain by going to Policy Governance:

Liberate the UUA President to be a leader
More time for the Board to look forward
Clarity of roles
Suspend micromanaging by the Board
Accountability to sources of authority

Suggest that every few years the Trustees complete a survey that asks what Trustees do in your District as a Trustee. Some Districts build into their bylaws that the Trustee is a full voting member, while some serve as ex-officio District Board members. Some receive money in the District budget for travel costs, most receive nothing. The additional work load placed on Trustees by Districts keep some from serving.

All who serve District, work with District staff who are co-employed. Some Trustees attend District Board meetings, some never do there is no consistency in roles, at this point. Some Trustees attend District Board meetings to foster relationships, some go for education.

The Board asked that the DPA discuss Trustees not attending District Board meetings; also discuss the money issue (Trustees serve the Association). District Boards work in parallel with UUA Board. Delivery of District services are going to change-be a part of the conversation.

Sunday

Sunday started with worship led by Peter Morales.

AR/AO/MC Reports-Jose Ballester, Tom Loughrey & John Blevins reported in on their own journeys.

Jose spoke to levels of disability and how we are/are not approaching them within our congregations.

He reminded us that multi-lingual is not the same as multi cultural.

John Blevins spoke to the AR/AO/MC spoke to the initiatives in his District and that the interfaith work he's done has been his deepest work, more clearly aware of the need for humility by UU's.

Tom Loughrey-spoke about his daughter, adopted from Cambodia. The family's cultural transition and transformative journey.

Task force on Ministry for Youth was formed with Doug/Linda/Nick/Lew/Rosemary/Chuck/Joe.

What does the Board need to know?

Need recent history

What is current staff & District support

Clear delineation & definition youth leadership movement

Results of work already done

Youth community-sources of authority & accountability

How do we engage with a community that has not been formed "formally"

What youth programming in other churches are like and where youth have found leadership

How can we make sure that we are accountable to youth of color

How do we draw a neat separation between youth and Young Adults

Is the movement more of a District and National thing than a congregational thing.

Who is the District youth leadership?

What is the small group to come back with?

Sort through long list/figure out top items/how would we cluster this/structure the conversation in January. Tap into the wisdom of our young adults.

January Board Meeting Location

Moving the January Board meeting outside of Boston has many considerations, among them:

Value in experiencing the Hispanic culture in San Antonio.

Need to make sure that our lodging, meeting space and catering made thru AR/AO/MC lens.

Aculturation and assimilation-learn the difference in San Antonio.

Us being sensitive to not being self-indulgent and also being aware of self care. Hold all needs equally.

Being able to interact with UU's in that area.

Link with sources of authority.

Uncomfortable that there are assumptions that other people don't live like us.

Discussion around wanting authentic experience and having the things we need for conducting business. Discussed logistics and physical space needs.

We may have more observers than usual.

What are the costs for always meeting in Boston?

What signal does that send? You are never out there with us!

Motion: Hold January BOT meeting in San Antonio (M/S/P)

Motions:

Approved new congregation in San Gabriel UU Fellowship of Georgetown, TX (M/S/P)

Board will sign and send hymnal

UU Church of Tullahoma, TN moving from Thomas Jefferson to Mid-South District (M/S/P)

Partnerships Working Group

Excellence in Ministry Working Group-Task force to examine credentialing process and recommend appropriate changes to Board by 4/1/11. Consist of convener and 4 people appointed by Executive Committee. Committee of this importance usually posted and opened up to the denomination. Referred to Committee on Committees.

Governance Working Group-cleaned up policies and appendix 3A to policy manual. Schedule of policy review and due dates, along with the annual calendar. (M/S/P)

Linkage Working Group-Rigor into selection process-formal selection of sources of authority (member congregations) Board decided to leave this with the working group to figure out.

Choosing our linkage focus-member congregations (M/S/P)

AR/AO/MC-no motions

Finance-motion to refer policy 2.8 "Financial Condition and Activities" back to the Committee. Recommended that it come back to the Board in April.

General Assembly rules need to be voted on at GA by the delegates. Regarding candidates statements. (M/S/P) Review rules to remove someone from Board for cause.

Discussion about public communications as a Board. What's appropriate, what does the policy say? Speaking for yourself or the Board? UU World asked John Blevins to speak for the Board re: governance. Peter remarked that if the Board does not frame the message, that doesn't mean that the message won't get out there. Some Board members troubled by individual members speaking for the Board. UU World interested in an authority voice on governance. This is a bigger conversation that is scheduled for April. Board okayed John speaking for governance working group to UU World. (M/S/P)

Asset Protection Policy-Dan Brody wondered if all the policies in 2.10 are needed. Gini allows as how the Board will be re-writing policy as they go along. Gini hesitates to make exceptions regarding the review of policies without the required time for review, as scheduled.

Next steps on youth ministry-Rosemary to work with staff to find info so that she can lead discussion at January meeting. John-work list looks like a monitoring report from staff, which may change work schedule. Board request the staff to provide by December 1, chronology 2004 to present. (M/S/P) [Laskowski].

The Board then moved into Executive Session for the remained of the meeting.

Overview

Much of the meeting was spent on reviewing the policies the Board established a few years ago and how they were now to govern under policy governance. This is a change in process and culture for the Board and they are all in a learning curve, along with the UUA staff. Subsequent meetings will surely see a progression in reporting from the staff and discussion of the monitoring reports by the Board.

Mary Ellen Morgan
President
District President's Association