

UUA Board Linkage, 2007 – 2012

March 2012

Linkage with Congregations

The UUA Board's first formal linkage activity after its adoption of Policy Governance® was with the General Assembly delegates in 2007, using "Open Space Technology" to identify values and the differences delegates wanted to make in the world. This was followed by an Appreciative Inquiry with about 500 delegates in Fort Lauderdale at GA2008. The "ends", values, and "Sources" created from these efforts were reviewed with about 250 members of four New England districts in October of 2008 in Worcester, MA. Over the next few months, 12 of the 19 district trustees held similar meetings in their districts, either in person or as webinars, to get feedback before finalizing them.

The "ends" were presented to several hundred congregational presidents at GA2009. Eighty-three of these presidents responded to the invitation to rank them, as did 56 attendees of a workshop at GA2009 on the ends, values, and Sources.

The Board's Linkage Working Group was formed in 2009, and in 2010 used Appreciative Inquiry to investigate the following questions:

1. Who represents the congregation? Given that we are accountable to "congregations," who should we be talking to within those congregations?
2. What values are most important to our congregations in healthy relationships? What can we do together to create a healthy relationship between the UUA Board and our member congregations?
3. What outcomes are important to our congregations? The UUA Board has a set of 20 outcomes or "ends" created from hundreds of conversations with UUs over several years. Which of these "ends" are most "top of mind" for our member congregations when they think about what differences they want us to make together in the world?
4. Is this process ("real time" interviews between trustees and congregational leaders) sustainable?

The interviews began with the San Antonio area congregations at the January 2010 board meeting, and ultimately involved the called and elected leadership of nearly 75 congregations from a randomly selected sample. The information was collected, published, and most of its recommendations adopted by the Board.

One of the recommendations was to partner in congregational linkage work with district boards through the District Presidents Association. This led to the establishment of a joint DPA-UUA Board Linkage Task Force. A set of tools to do

congregational linkage was provided to the District Presidents at their meeting in November of 2011. This work is ongoing.

The Board is also in partnership with the UUA staff, the District Presidents Association, the UU Ministers Association, and 8 other UU organizations to do Gathered Here, linkage to identify the best of our past to carry into our future. This effort is expected to run through 2012.

Linkage with Non-Congregational Sources

Though not as systematic as linkage with congregational delegates and leaders, there have been various attempts to ascertain and incorporate the values of the other 4 Sources.

The UUA Board has held a “World Café” with Youth Caucus at the past two General Assemblies with small group discussion on important topics that invite feedback from **Current and Future Generations of Unitarian Universalists**. As an historian, board member Rev. Dr. Susan Ritchie is often asked to provide a written or verbal context of the **Heritage, Traditions, and Ideals of Unitarian Universalism** for many of our issues. Board meetings in San Antonio, Phoenix, and New Orleans included meeting with community organizations and partners outside of the UU community that share our **Vision of Beloved Community**. And finally, the Linkage Working Group and Board Worship Team have partnered to create opportunities throughout the past two board meetings to connect with **the Spirit of Life, love, and the holy**.

Wanting a more rigorous approach, the Linkage Working Group contracted with Unity Consulting in December of 2011 to create a protocol for linking with non-congregational sources, targeted for the new board beginning in June of 2013.