

**Report of District President's Association Observer at UUA Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**Kathy Burek, President, District President's Association**  
**October 17-21, 2012**

Participants: everyone except Charles King

Overview: Rather than attempt to document every discussion or on each action taken by the Board over the past five days, this report focuses on major issues. Reports and agendas may be found at <http://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/board/packets/index.shtml>. The Board's work resulted in the production of a number of draft documents that are works in progress, and will not be cited here. These documents will be polished over the next several months, and will be ready for adoption at the Board's January 2013 meeting. This report will note the topics discussed, summarize key board actions from its business meeting, and provide some observations about the conduct of the Board meeting.

Multicultural Competency Training: The Board and senior UUA staff spent Wednesday with trainers from Crossroads building their multicultural competency skills. (I regret that I was unable to attend that training). Handouts from the training session contrasted dominant culture thinking (e.g., either/or, scarcity) with multicultural thinking (both/and, abundance). The skills acquired by the Board informed their work throughout the 5 days of meetings. Multicultural competency training will be available to new trustees, all board-appointed committee chairs, and members of the District Presidents' Association Monday and Tuesday after General Assembly.

Gathered Here Initiative:

Prior to this board meeting, a team of board members and senior UUA staff reviewed the documentation from the Gathered Here conversations that were conducted last year. The group reviewed and iterated the draft set of Positive Core Principles. The resulting Core set was used to inform the development of a revised Global Ends Statement.

Global Ends Statement: Much of the work of this meeting focused on revising the Board's Global Ends Statement. The purpose of the Global Ends Statement is to specify results desired from the work of the UUA. Small groups comprised of Trustees, UUA officials, and observers engaged in a step-by-step process of building the necessary components leading to a revised, draft Global Ends Statement. The board, staff, and some observers will work in teams to revise lower level Ends between now and the January 2013 Board meeting.

Non-congregational Sources of Authority and Accountability: Non-congregational Sources include

- Current and future generations of UUs
- Heritage and traditions
- Vision of Beloved Community
- Spirit of Life, Love, and the Holy

An important step in the Policy Governance process is the development of operational definitions of key Policy elements. These operational definitions permit monitoring of performance relative to the adopted policy. In this case, the board needs operational definitions so that it can develop plans for linkage with these sources. The process followed that of the Ends work: small groups of Board members, staff and observers discussed key components. These suggestions will be used by the Linkage Working Group to develop linkage activities for these non-congregational Sources.

Covenant Task Force: The discussion leading up to the “Justice GA” decision AT GA 2011 was experienced by some participants as hurtful and disrespectful. A responsive resolution asked the Board to address the issue of behavioral covenant at GA. The Board and the GA Planning Committee are taking up this issue for GA 2013. Accordingly, the theme for GA 2013 will be “Promise and Commitment”, (aka “Covenant”). The Task Force met to suggest a process to the Board for how covenant can be addressed throughout GA. Further work will be done over the next several months, in preparation for the Board’s January meeting. The goal is for the upcoming GA to provide participants with an opportunity to deeply explore the meaning and nature of our covenant now and for the future.

5<sup>th</sup> Principle Task Force: in 2009, the 5<sup>th</sup> Principle Task Force issued several recommendations to the Board regarding how to make GA more truly democratic, and more accessible, so that it would be more truly reflect the diversity of our Association’s membership. The Task Force’s recommendations contained implications that would impact districts, regions, clusters, and other groupings of UUs. The Board, UUA Staff and observers met in small groups to discuss the TF recommendations, and provide feedback to the Board. The Board will be developing a process for engaging congregations in a deeper discussion of how UUs gather.

Business Items: Of the many significant business items addressed by the Board, one that stands out relates to Youth and Young Adults (Y/YA). Several business and responsive resolutions passed at GAs called on the UUA to provide opportunities for national structures for Youth and Young Adults. The Board acknowledged that in this case, and in some others, they have not always been diligent in monitoring to see if the administration was working on such resolutions. At the same time, the Youth Observer, the former Youth Observer, and members of the Right Relations Committee felt that the administration had failed to respond to the call for Youth and Young Adult programming. They also noted that this failure was also present at many levels throughout the UUA, including districts and regions. The Board asked the administration to respond to its concerns by late November.

Observations:

- The Board is gracious, welcoming, and appropriately inclusive of observers. I deeply appreciated being included in the discussions of Positive Core Principles, Ends Statements, and the operational definition of non-congregational Sources, as well as in the Covenant Task Force, Right Relations Team, and Governance Working Group meetings. Including an individual from a local congregation on the same basis as

stakeholders with more formal positions clearly indicated the board's commitment to openness and transparency.

- Clearly, Board members prepare well for these meetings. Despite an advance packet of nearly 300 pages of reading, and many additional pages being produced throughout the meeting, Board members showed their familiarity with content and had reflected on the material well enough to ask thoughtful questions.
- The board effectively used the multicultural competency training they went through the first day of the meetings. The training was referenced frequently, in a way that showed the board was serious about applying the skills.
- The Board and senior members of the administration worked effectively together on the preparation of the Core Principles from the Gathered Here Appreciative Inquiry initiative, conducted over the last year. Board and administration also worked effectively to create revised Ends statements and operational definitions of the non-congregational Sources of Authority and Accountability.
- There is still tension and mutual frustration between the board and the administration, particularly the President. The Board sees the Policies it adopts as directing the President and staff, while the President emphasizes his status as an independently elected official. The President was frustrated and disappointed by having only 5 minutes to make a report; the Board felt his reports should be longer and more detailed.
- Monitoring reports are more often accepted as written, but there remain divergent views of content and format in some cases.
- While tensions exist, Board members are working to understand where they need to clarify Policy, so that they get the results and reporting they need from the administration. Administration staff, for their part, seems to demonstrate the desire to understand the Board's needs, and then to meet those needs.