

Jim Key's Special Report from the Board, November 9, 2010

Report from the Board

Imagine an Association of Congregations that delivers our liberal and liberating faith tradition to a multi-racial and multi-cultural world in need. Imagine a governance structure that enables this to become a reality. Imagine a democratic process where all voices are heard and we honor our covenantal heritage.

Your Board has been working to make those imaginings a reality. We have taken significant actions over the past year in the areas of anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multi-culturalism (ARAOMC) as well as in the area of governance. At our meeting in October, your board took additional actions that we want you to be aware of. After the holidays, we will schedule Town Hall webinars to provide more information and answer any questions you may have about these initiatives.

ARAOMC Actions

The ARAOMC monitoring committee of the board made its first report after receiving recommendations from the Anti-Racism Task Force in August. The monitoring committee chair, Peter Kandis, will report more fully at the February Board Meeting. In the interim, the board committed to read *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit* to gain cultural competency as we lead congregations, clusters, districts, regions, and our Association in becoming the multi-racial, multi-cultural faith movement we want and need to be.

Annette Marquis reviewed the experience of the Annapolis, MD congregation as it pursues an intentional course of becoming multi-cultural and its implications for congregations in TJD. She also updated your board on our district's own intentionally multi-racial, multi-cultural congregations: Peter Cooper in Memphis, All Souls in Durham, and First UU in Richmond. Annette will bring proposals to the board in February on how we might provide resources to these and other congregations who are on an intentional path toward becoming multi-racial and multi-cultural.

Governance Actions

Your board has been transforming its governance structure and policies for several years. In October, we examined four areas of governance practices and structures that are inhibiting growth of our Association: growth through connection, growth in right relationships, and growth in service.

First, global ends (vision and strategies) of districts may be different from and not aligned with the global ends of our Association. This is distracting for our district and UUA staffs as well as for our member congregations.

Second and related to the first, district executives and other staff are co-employed by both UUA management and district boards. This co-employment requires the staff to respond to monitoring

requirements from both entities. Moreover, there is wide variability in how co-employed staffs are funded across the Association as it relates to UUA and district contributions. This variability is inequitable.

Third, there are 19 districts within our UUA. This organizational approach results in higher governance costs in both human capital and monetary resources than is desirable or sustainable for an association of our size.

Fourth, too many congregations are isolated from other congregations, their clusters, our district, and our Association.

In an effort to deliver on our vision and to guide our disparate parts to an aligned whole, your board approved the following initiatives at our October meeting.

1. Global Ends Statements

The UUA Board of Trustees and many district boards of directors/trustees have developed Global Ends Policies that guide our various strategies to live out our vision for this world. There is some debate whether any district Global Ends Policies should be different from our Association Global Ends. While there may be supplemental ends policies unique to a specific geography, we believe any district's Ends should be the same as our Association Ends. Having alignment of Ends statements will eliminate confusion on the part of our sources of authority and accountability and other stakeholders.

Given this background, your board approved the following motion:

Suspend Sections 2 and 3 of the TJD Board Policy Manual, Vision and Global Ends, for a trial period of approximately two years and embrace our UUA Board of Trustees' Global Ends. These ends can be found at <<http://www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/policy/>>.

During this period while the TJD Global Ends are suspended, your TJD Board will be in dialogue with the congregations we serve, our UUA Board of Trustees, the District Presidents' Association, and other district boards. We will consider the risks and benefits of having a shared vision and global ends throughout the Association.

It is anticipated that this period of dialogue and discernment will conclude at the TJD Annual Meeting in 2012 with a recommendation from your TJD Board to the delegates to permanently adopt our UUA Global Ends as the TJD Global Ends or revert to those accepted by the delegates to the TJD Annual Meeting in 2010.

2. Co-employed District Staff

The President of our UUA is accountable to the UUA Board of Trustees. Moreover, his performance is measured against progress towards Global Ends within Executive Limitations Policies. In turn, UUA staff, which includes district staff also employed by district boards, are also monitored against those policies.

In the Thomas Jefferson District, our District Executive (DE) receives direction from the Director of Congregational Life and is required to submit monitoring reports to satisfy the Governance requirements of our UUA Board of Trustees through the President. Additionally, our DE receives direction from the TJD Board of Directors as detailed in Section 8, Board/Executive Linkage of the TJD Policy Manual < <http://www.tjdistrict.org/tjdgovernance/policiesprocedures.html>>. That section mandates certain monitoring activities as determined by policy.

The result of this dual employment model is that co-employed staff receives direction from two governing bodies with two monitoring schedules. This redundant monitoring requirement consumes valuable resources and diverts constrained resources from their primary role of providing services and support to the congregations we serve.

Given this background, your board approved the following motion:

Suspend Section 8 of the TJD Board Policy Manual, Board/Executive Linkage, for a trial period of approximately two years and defer to our UUA as the singular employer of the DE and other co-employed staff.

During this period while the original Board/Linkage section is suspended, your Board will be in dialogue with the congregations we serve, the Director of Congregational Life, our UUA Board of Trustees, the District Presidents' Association, and other district boards on the risks and benefits of moving to a single employer model. Additionally, the TJD President will consult with the DE and the Director of Congregational Life to develop a Service Level Agreement (SLA). This SLA envisions the DE, and any staff reporting to her, as employees of our UUA. Further, the SLA will establish the DE as the Relationship Executive to the TJD Board. Moreover, it is suggested that our UUA Board and Executive staff will take up the issue of expense sharing between and among districts to resolve the inequities of the present system of negotiated and inequitable cost-sharing formulas.

It is anticipated that this period of dialogue and discernment will conclude at the TJD Annual Meeting in 2012 with a recommendation from your Board to adopt a single employer model or revert to the co-employment model assumed in Section 8 of your TJD Board Policy Manual accepted by the delegates to the TJD Annual Meeting in 2010.

3. District Organizations

Most management consultants in the area of Governance have long believed that an organization with less than 200,000 members nation-wide cannot sustain a governance model with a 25-member Board of Trustees. Best practices suggest a high performance board is one that is diverse, has from 8 to 12 trustees or directors, and is the singular governance structure for the entity. Our UUA Board of Trustees is to be commended for its work toward reducing the size of that board.

Over the past decade, there have been countless meetings, discussions, and teleconferences by our UUA Board of Trustees, District Boards, District Presidents Association, and other work

groups to consider other models of governance and service delivery. The UUA Congregational Life staff has moved to a regional organization for service delivery. This regional model harnesses the specialties and energies of the various district staffs into a virtual regional staff. In the Southland Region-comprised of TJD, Mid-South, and Florida districts, and the Southwest Conference-the four district staffs have been working together for several years, most notably in the area of leadership development and consulting. More recently, representatives of the four Southland district boards met in Minneapolis in June to discuss ways to re-imagine the roles of districts and regions as it relates to governance. These four board groups, our UUA trustees, and staff will meet in Orlando in December to continue this discussion of governance structure possibilities.

Given this background, your board approved the following motion:

Enter into discussions with boards of those districts contiguous with our border, e.g. Mid-South and Florida, to consider the risks and benefits of consolidation of two or more of the districts. It is anticipated that this period of dialogue and discernment will take several years so no specific end date for this discussion is anticipated at this time. Moreover, it is assumed a working group will be formed to develop project, communication, and monitoring plans. This working group will include district board members, district staff, and others.

During the period of analysis and review, it is essential for these activities to be transparent to the congregations we serve with the intent that whatever emerges as possible new entities will be put to a vote of the congregational delegates to our annual meeting. The review will focus on reducing the costs of governance, freeing resources to better serve congregations, supporting more efficiently district staffs, strengthening cluster organizations, and growing Unitarian Universalism in the South. It assumes that delivery of services to congregations would be improved with the identification of subject-matter specific staffing, e.g. Social Justice, Emerging Congregations, Stewardship, Youth and Young Adult, State Legislative Advocates, etc. that would be geography wide. Moreover, it assumes the present DE position(s) would be that of Relationship Executive(s) for a specified geography and would be singularly employed and directed by the UUA staff.

Activities that might be considered during the period of discernment include but are not limited to:

- *Joint board meetings*
- *Combined annual meetings*
- *Combined conferences*
- *Town-hall webinars*
- *Teleconferences with board, trustee, staff, cluster, and congregational representation*

4. Isolated Congregations - Linkage Initiatives

Under our by-laws, the Vice President is charged with the responsibility of chairing a Liaisons Committee "to facilitate two-way communication between the Board and the member congregations, state conferences, cluster groups, and individuals in the District. Such

communications shall include promoting support of the UUA Annual Fund and district dues, encouraging participation in district, sub-district, and denominational programs, and bringing to the Board concerns of member congregations, sub-district groups, and individuals in the District." This has been challenging for directors over the years.

Denise Rimes, District VP, and Jake Morrill, District UUA Trustee, have been asked by their respective boards to examine linkage partnership opportunities with congregations as suggested by policy initiatives of both our UUA and TJD boards.

Given this background, your board approved the following motion:

Support our UUA Board of Trustees as it works to enable and monitor the Linkage policies of our Association. The TJD Board commits to be our UUA Board's partner in linkage initiatives. The District Trustee will be the champion for our UUA Board and the Vice President will be the champion for your District Board. It is anticipated that these two positions will collaborate and bring proposals for both boards to consider that will connect our congregations to each other, our District, and our Association as envisioned by the framers of the Cambridge Platform. It is further envisioned that this work will strengthen and support existing cluster groups and encourage the formation of other cluster groups.

With your TJD Board embracing these initiatives, we believe we can be a significant voice to accelerate the transition to a governance and service delivery model that will conserve resources, improve services to congregations and clusters, and resonate with new members who will be attracted to what we are affectionately calling Southern Fried Unitarian Universalism.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Key, President

Thomas Jefferson District of the UUA