

President's Report

Thomas Jefferson District Board Meeting
October 8, 2010,
Richmond, VA

We, as a board, developed a strong vision in 2009. That vision emerged when we reflected deeply on our shared values:

Grounded in our covenantal tradition, we are a vibrant faith community of healthy congregations who grow through connection, right relationships, and service, thereby transforming ourselves and the world.

Since becoming President of TJD in 2008, I have been reflecting on how our actions, as a board, can be a catalyst to accelerate the growth of our association: growth through connection, growth in right relationships, and growth in service.

Imagine an Association whose governance effectively guides our movement to the strength and health we are capable of. Imagine congregations engaged in the democratic process as the norm. Imagine us all aligned, moving in the same direction, toward that vision we share. As we imagine what we could become, we need to consider four issues that have been challenging our Unitarian Universalist Association (Association) for several years, and they are all related to governance:

First, global ends of districts that may be different from global ends of the Association and therefore, distracting for our staffs and congregations.

Second and related to the first, the challenge to district executives and others who are co-employed to respond to monitoring requirements from both the UUA executive team and district boards-. This co-employment issue includes the variability in how co-employed staffs are funded as it relates to UUA and district contributions.

Third, the large number of districts in a small organization and its related governance costs in both human and monetary resources.

Comment [DMR1]: You have provided some detail below in your motion; however, I think we will ultimately need to be able to answer the question as to how we work with the Dir. of Cong. Life if certain expectations aren't met in the SLA.

Fourth, the significant number of congregations that appear to be isolated from other congregations, the district, and the association.

In an effort to deliver on our vision and guide our disparate parts to an aligned whole, I am proposing the Board of Directors of the Thomas Jefferson District ([TJD](#)) of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations ([UUA](#)) approve the following initiatives.

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 Association Global Ends. While there may be supplemental ends policies unique to a specific geography, in my judgment any district's ends should be the same as the Association Ends. Having alignment of Ends statements will eliminate confusion on the part of our sources of authority and accountability and other stakeholders.

Therefore, I propose the following:

Moved: 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 the UUA Board of Trustees' Global Ends, which are:

1.0 Grounded in our covenantal tradition, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association will inspire people to lead lives of humility and purpose, connection and service, thereby transforming themselves and the world.

1.0.1 Congregations unlock the power that transforms lives.

1.0.1.1 In our congregations, participants deepen their spiritual lives. People:

- a. Develop a personal spiritual practice
- b. Participate in meaningful worship
- c. Learn and practice empowered leadership and generosity
- d. Find their ministry in the world

1.0.1.2. Congregations are:

- a. Vibrant — joyful and excited about their ministries
- b. Intentionally multi-generational and multi-cultural

- c. Embracing and struggling with issues of oppression and privilege
- d. Open and inclusive in their outreach and welcome
- e. Ministries deeply shared by ministers and the laity
- f. Active participants in ministerial preparation and development
- g. Growing in membership
- h. Living their mission in their communities

1.0.2 Congregations live in covenant with other congregations in our Association through:

- a. A strong, articulated sense of UU and community identity
- b. High expectations of their members
- c. Full participation in Associational life
- d. Networking with each other

1.0.3 Congregations move toward sustainability, wholeness and reconciliation through:

- 1.0.3.1. Answering the call to ministry and justice work:
- a. Grounded in the communities in which they live
 - b. Nationally and internationally
 - c. With interfaith partners and alliances

1.0.3.2 Engaging the public in meaningful dialogue and action, informed by our prophetic voice and public witness.

1.0.4 These are all at equal priority and are to be achieved within a justifiable costs.

During this period while the TJD Global Ends are suspended, the Board will be in dialogue with the congregations we serve, the UUA Board of Trustees, the District Presidents' Association, and other district boards on 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 the Board to the delegates to permanently adopt the 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 the 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 co-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 the 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. That section mandates certain monitoring activities as determined by policy.

The result of this co-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.

Therefore, I propose the following:

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

During this period while the original Board/Linkage section is suspended, the Board will be in dialogue with the congregations we serve, the Director of Congregational Life, the 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. This Agreement envisions the DE as an employee only of the UUA but as the Relationship Executive to the TJD Board. Moreover, it is suggested that the 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 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 the Board to the delegates to permanently adopt a single employer model or revert to the co-employment model assumed in Section 8 of the TJD Board Policy Manual accepted by the delegates to the TJD Annual Meeting in 2010.

3. District Organizations

As a management consultant in the area of Governance, I have long believed that an organization with less than 200,000 members nationwide 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. The UUA Board of Trustees is to be commended for its work toward reducing the size of that board.

There have been many meetings, discussions, and teleconferences by the UUA Board of Trustees, District Boards, District Presidents' Association, and other work groups to consider other models of governance and service delivery.

In the area of service delivery, the UUA Congregational Life staff has moved to an informal regional organization that harnesses the specialties and energies of the district staffs into a virtual regional staff. In the Southland Region—comprised of TJD, Mid-South, and Florida districts, and Southwest Conference—the four district staffs have been working together for several years, most notably in the area of leadership development.

In the area of governance, representatives of the four district boards met in Minneapolis in June to discuss ways to re-imagine the roles of districts and regions. Those discussions continue.

Therefore, I propose the following:

Moved: 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 of whatever emerges as possible new entities will be put to a vote to the congregational delegates to our annual meeting. The review will focus on the 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 Relationship Executive(s) for a specified geography and 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 over the tenure of my five years on the board.

Denise Rimes and Jake Morrill have been asked by their respective boards to examine linkage opportunities with congregations as suggested by policy initiatives of both the UUA and TJD boards.

Therefore, I propose the following:

Moved: Support the UUA Board of Trustees as it works to enable and monitor the Linkage policies of the Association. The TJD Board commits to be the UUA Board's partner in linkage initiatives. The District Trustee will be the champion for the UUA Board and the Vice President will be the champion for the 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, the District, and the 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 the TJD Board embracing these initiatives, I believe we can be a significant voice to accelerate the transition to a governance and delivery service model that will conserve resources, improve services to congregations and clusters, and resonate with new members who will be attracted to Southern Fried Unitarian Universalism.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Key, President
Thomas Jefferson District of the UUA