

Vice President's Report

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

During the agenda Board retreat; I took responsibility for a review of the by-laws through the lens of policy governance and continuing to work on linkage relationships with our District congregations. Given the time commitment dedicated to the Annual Anti-Racism Conference, I have not had the opportunity to work on the bylaws since we met six weeks or so ago.

I did have continuing conversations regarding the issues of linkage. There are essentially two key work streams around linkage:

1. TJ District and the UUA
2. TJ District and its member congregations

A third work stream, around the UUA and member congregations has been underway for some months now, and we are well-represented by Rev. Jake Morrill in that effort.

Linkage is at the heart of collaboration, and our history calls us to it. It is a consistent and somewhat uniform relationship between a body and its moral authority. Our current connections, both upstream (with the UUA) and downstream (with the member congregations) are not consistent and uniform, and for successful collaboration to occur, could use greater alignment. As the UUA works to gain stronger connections with its member congregations, there is a need to avoid districts working separately towards the same ends. Essentially, the TJ District Ends and the UUA Ends are the same, and although there may be some unique needs at the district level, there are many common themes across the Association. A duplication of effort to meet similar needs creates confusion and rework, and potentially leads to the dissatisfaction of our moral authority (our congregations) and stakeholders.

Linkage needs to ensure that leaders connect with congregations. The congregations represent "local values", which drive the need for a "local voice." A district or regional Board can act as the representation of that voice at the Association level to build a strong partnership and act as the key liaison between the congregations and the Association. Again, the key is to simplify the connections to prevent a fragile structure where responsibilities and authority is unclear.

I would propose that Rev. Morrill serve as the champion or representative in these efforts for the TJ District. Rather than try to build a structure for the District separate from the work that the UUA is doing, we can work with Jake, and perhaps even lead the effort in the Association. Partnering with him and Annette Marquis¹, I can serve as the liaison to the congregations as we explore opportunities to strengthen our relationships within, among, and beyond.

¹ Cluster management is currently a responsibility of the District Staff, so process would dictate Annette's involvement.