

**MBD Board of Directors  
Meeting Minutes  
December 7, 2007**

Meeting was called to order at 8:40am. It was held at Terasa Cooley's home in Arlington.

**Present**

Directors: Barbara Bates, John Laursen (Secretary), Pat Manley, Lynne Merl, Lilli Nye, Jim Sherblom (President), Melissa Quirk (Vice-President and Chief Governing Officer).

MBD Staff: Terasa Cooley (District Executive), Liz Strong (Program Consultant).

The meeting was called to order at around 9am.

**ACTION:** Minutes of September 15, 2007 meeting were approved.

Opening Words: Participants offered observations on the state of their congregations. Some interesting notes:

- Roughly one-third of current UU ministers across the nation will be retiring in 3 to 4 years.
- Many transitions and discernment of missions.
- Many interim situations within the District congregations.

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

**District Presidents' Meeting Report**

Board President, Jim Sherblom, attended this meeting held on the first weekend of December at the UUA in Boston. Of note:

- Association Sunday went well. \$15-20k will be returned to districts for program development.
- Administrator of District Services, Harlan Limpert, is reviewing the co-funding model that has supported Liz Strong's position. Upon Liz's retirement at the end of the program year, the funds that supported this position will remain with the District.
- Combining UUA and District dues is being considered.
- Much interest was expressed in Policy Governance. Districts that have adopted Policy Governance have been asked to offer observations and guidance to those considering changing to this model. Also much interest expressed of adapting Policy Governance into a more "covenantal" model. The 2008 GA will hold sessions around this topic.
- Interest in developing better metrics to measure key aspects of participation in UUA and District events. Wider participation amongst MBD congregations not as strong as in other districts. This is partly dependant upon how current metrics are interpreted.
- Congregations Come First initiative is not moving forward, but newer models are being considered.
- Ballou Channing District is struggling financially. Discussion has continued around the possibility of this district being absorbed into the MBD.

**By-Law Update**

A draft of proposed changes to the MBD By-Laws was developed over the past three years, intended to align with the Board's adoption of Policy Governance. The Board intends to offer the draft to the 2008 Annual Meeting delegates for their approval. John Laursen and Terasa will draft a one-page summary of salient points for distribution to Annual Meeting delegates and interested parties.

**2008 Annual Meeting Planning**

Will be held on Sunday, April 13, 2008, 5 to 8pm, at First Parish in Concord. UUA Executive Vice-President Kay Montgomery will be the keynote speaker. There will also be opportunities for participants to hold structured conversations about managing fair-share optimally. This will be an invitation-only catered dinner meeting for congregational presidents, ministers, DRE's, and delegates. The Nominating Committee has been alerted to seek recruits for new Directors. The Board expressed interest in candidates that hold views beyond their church of membership. There was also interest in developing a

better means of getting information about Directors duties and Board structure to those interested in serving on the Board.

### **District Executive Incidental Report**

Youth and Young Adult services and resources need significant prioritization and development within the District. Many residential colleges and universities with little or no UU presence. Some schools have small self-organized groups but with no connection to the larger organization. There is strong need to develop a network with these schools and more Young Adult Campus Ministry. Terasa intends to earmark funds to be given to the District from Association Sunday to develop a Young Adult Coordinator position. Terasa also identified the need to reenergize the Chalice Lighter program. The District Youth Steering Committee (DYSC) is in transition with no decisions made as yet. The UUA Youth Summit Report has recommended that the district youth structure change to reflect a broader youth voice that is inclusive of the youth groups within the local congregations. The DYSC, Chris Cayer and Liz are holding discussion at their monthly meetings about the structure that will best meet the Ends of the Mass Bay District.

### **Upcoming Events in 2008**

Terasa and Liz highlighted a few upcoming events. The Presidents' Convocation is occurring on January 12, at the MBD Office and the UU Revival is scheduled to be held on May 17 at First Parish in Canton. This is a much anticipated event to include 4 preachers, small group discussions, children's events and family worship. The Art & Craft of Leadership program has been positively received and relatively widely attended. Of note are the two events in February: The RE Credentialing Program on 2/6 at First Unitarian in Newton and The Spiritual Life and Faith Development of UU Parents on 2/12 at First Parish in Arlington.

### **Policy Governance Training: Observations and Feedback**

In September, three Directors, Pat Manley, Lynne Merl, Lilli Nye, were sent to the weekend Carver Policy Governance Workshop in Atlanta. All considered it an enriching experience and helpful in clarifying intentions and accountability. A discussion followed concerning the adapting of Policy Governance into a "covenantal" model that would be more appropriate for congregational governance. The Board agreed to create a summary of Policy Governance for prospective and new Directors.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Reflection on District Ends Goals**

Terasa and Barbara led the group in a discussion on the complication of how District ends can be sufficiently distinguished by a Board that cannot be in a position to be as informed about District matters as the Executive Director. Board education, therefore, remains a significant task of the Board in order to govern effectively. Terasa also offered the Board a reflective report on this topic. Several points emerged out of the discussion:

The current District Ends now appear too diffuse in their goals.

Polity really means that congregations are independent of the District. What is the District's relationship with member congregations?

District ends are determined, then, by the District's establishment and maintenance of an "influential" position with the congregations.

Current ends were established out of the "Healthy Congregations" model, now perceived as too much of a "one model fits all" model.

A new model of relationship between the District and congregations requires more complex, dynamic, and comprehensive interaction.

Creation of more reliable metrics of effectiveness of District outreach; of events, workshops and networks. Such metrics would be based upon the careful learning from working with the congregations: Who participates in such activities, who "regularly" attends, who doesn't, and why.

Tracking the connections between congregations with the District that help them broaden their horizons as well as gain the self-critical insight and mutual support that is part of our UU congregational polity.

External cultural pressures influencing changes and conflicts in congregations. These external pressures are not typically perceived as such within congregations which may respond with a variety of apparent internal conflicts.

People are joining UU churches for a variety of reasons. Many are curious about Unitarian Universalism. Yet many churches have a "structure" of governance, leadership, and specializations that are often at odds with this membership trend. One result is the perpetual need to fill committee seats.

Solution to create nimble staff teams that hold accountability for the church's mission and to create a behavioral covenant for all members.

Learning about polity and UUism needs to occur both more organically and according to a clearer curriculum to accommodate different learning styles.

Finding balance between needs and values of the "old-timers" and those of new comers and newer members. This is essential for "buy-in" by the longer term members and for sustaining a welcoming program that retains newcomers.

Monitoring of the work of the District will involve measuring *how the District made a difference in congregational life*.

This discussion led to a review of new Ends Statements that Terasa offered in her report to which the Board made three changes (strikethroughs/underlines):

It is the ~~end purpose~~ of the Mass. Bay District of UU Congregations to *assist* in the development of spiritually healthy and covenantally based Unitarian Universalist congregations by:

- Assessing the needs of and providing resources for congregational leaders to help them become agents of transformation in their congregations.
- Bringing an outside perspective for congregations to learn from broader religious, cultural, and academic contexts.
- ~~Being an advocate~~ Advocating for the growth and spiritual vitality of Unitarian Universalism In the ~~Boston metro area~~ District.
- Activating the capacity and potential of our congregations to become communities where individuals may grow spiritually throughout their lives and learn how to live in respectful covenantal relationship with one another.
- Deepening the connection among UU congregations so that they may be agents of social transformation addressing inequities and injustices in our broader community.

**ACTION:** The Board approved the above statement as the new District Ends statement or purpose statement with the three indicated changes.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 1:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Laurenson, Secretary