

Report of the Strategic Plan

Governance Team

to UUSJ Board

October 3, 2020

At the last meeting of the Board, September 4, 2020 the Governance Team reported its preliminary concepts of the new, revised structure of UUSJ that the Team was considering for recommendation to the Board. At the September 4th meeting and in the weeks following, the Team heard from a number of Board members about the proposals we were considering. Although there was general support for making changes in the UUSJ governance structure and solid support for many of the ideas we advanced, there were also some concerns raised. We received email comments from Gary Magnuson, David Shilton, Bob Denniston, John Peterson, and others; Bob Denniston came to one of our team meetings and elaborated on one of his principal ideas: in his experience organizations like UUSJ benefit from establishing an advisory council from which expertise can be drawn. We considered all these comments, as we drafted the proposals we are attaching to this report.

In our discussions over the past few months we also considered some of the various governance models advanced by some academics and employed in some organizations of the size and development stage as UUSJ. We did not follow the “policy governance” model of John Carver, because it would be too administratively burdensome to employ fully, but we borrowed from well-developed components of this model in establishing division of labor, accountability, and process.

Likewise we found some great ideas about how to engage individuals in some of Dan Hotchkiss’s work. Where he falls short in our view is that he sees the mission as the moral owner. In other organizations this has led to a self-reverential culture that fails to engage in an accountable fashion. To avoid that we used the Carver model in structuring accountability. But we did draw on Hotchkiss’s more effective and efficient ideas for the management of goals and creating efficient systems using volunteer staff.

The chief questions raised September 4th and afterwards concerned the board’s size, how it will be chosen, and its composition. Some commenters were concerned that a smaller board of nine to eleven members would not be adequate to handle the business of UUSJ and that the Executive Director, other paid staff, and volunteers would be overwhelmed. In our view these apprehensions are misplaced, because a smaller Board, which does not attempt to be a “working board” implementing programs, but which focuses on setting policy and goals, financial matters, fund raising, and reviewing the Executive Director’s progress towards

goals, will be more efficient and effective on board matters. A Board of nine to eleven members will also free at least eleven current members, about 16 alternates, and other potential board talent to serve UUSJ as volunteer staff. There will also still be some opportunities for non-board members to serve on committees of the Board.

Another concern expressed was that not allowing congregations to appoint Board members would weaken the ties between congregations and UUSJ, making congregations unwilling to pay substantial dues to UUSJ. In this view, unless each congregation could appoint someone to the UUSJ Board, UUSJ would no longer have an advocate within each congregation and dues (aka "Fair Share") contributions to UUSJ would lapse.

We considered these and other concerns in making our recommendations. **We decided to continue to recommend a smaller board of nine to eleven members**, because we believe the advantages of a smaller board which is able to focus on and effectively manage board level work far outweigh the alleged disadvantages. We believe the additional pool of talent created by reducing the board size can and will be utilized to great advantage as volunteer staff.

We are also recommending that the board be entirely appointed "at large" and not by member congregations. This will enable us to appoint a board that is representative of a larger universe of moral owners (e.g., all UU's and all UU congregations) and more diverse in gender, age, race, and geography. **We believe that congregations which value what UUSJ does will be at least as, if not more, interested, in providing financial support to UUSJ as they were when they appointed a board member. We do not believe that congregations value a seat on UUSJ's board more than they value UUSJ's work.** If they do, that is a thin reed on which to base UUSJ's finances.

However, we agree that there should be some formal way to link member congregations with UUSJ. Therefore, **we are proposing that UUSJ ask each member congregation to appoint a "Congregational Liaison" to UUSJ.** This will be the primary person at each congregation responsible to keep in contact with UUSJ. The Executive Director will keep the Congregational Liaisons informed about opportunities for their congregation to engage with UUSJ. We believe this arrangement will ensure steady communication between UUSJ and each member congregation on a range of issues, including dues payment and engagement with UUSJ programs. Unitarian Universalists Service Committee (UUSC) is using this liaison system successfully, and we propose that we model our liaison system on theirs.

We agree that a smaller UUSJ Board may reduce access to some specialized expertise that might be found on a larger board. Therefore, for this and other reasons **we are recommending that UUSJ develop a "Roster of Advisors" to assist UUSJ in its operations.** Advisors can be former board members, experts, leaders from collaborative partners, representatives from moral owner groups, etc. The Executive Director may call on any of these advisors for advice and/or assistance as necessary or useful.

Finally, in order to grow, become a national organization, and represent a broader range of moral owners UUSJ needs to diversify the composition of its board. **We recommend electing to the Nominating Committee in December two additional members who are not currently or formerly on the Board with a goal of increasing the diversity of geographic, racial, gender, age, and UU justice-making experience on the Committee.** At the Board meeting in December we recommend that the Board instruct the Nominating Committee to begin the search for eleven candidates to serve on the new board beginning July 1, 2021. Again the goal will be to have geographic, racial, gender, age, and UU justice-making diversity among the candidates. Some have questioned how to compose the board to achieve these diversity goals, while not losing all institutional and historical knowledge of the current UUSJ. In our view, there should be a significant share of completely new members on the new board in order that new organizational practices and ways of thinking can take hold. Given the current demographics of the board this is probably also necessary in order to achieve a reasonable degree of geographic and other diversity. As noted previously, there will be plenty of opportunities for current board members to serve in the new UUSJ in roles other than Trustee, for example, as volunteer staff, Congregational Liaison, Advisor, and Committee member.

Attached are: the proposed new Bylaws of UUSJ, a copy of the current Bylaws, four proposed Governance Process (GP) Policies, policies regarding Executive Limitations, and a list of Motions for Adopting Governance Materials. Most of the changes to the Bylaws should be self-explanatory. We will be providing the Board with additional proposed policies in coming weeks. The motions are those currently contemplated in order to adopt the Bylaws and implement the proposals discussed previously.

Please review the Bylaws and policies, which we will discuss briefly today, and send any questions or thoughts to the Governance Team. It would be our hope to respond to questions prior to or at the next meeting of the Board to discuss governance (hopefully in late October) and to begin to vote on these motions at that time.

Respectfully submitted for the Governance Team,

Sean McCarthy, Chair

Charlotte Jones-Carroll, Emily Koechlin, & David Strauss, Members

Attached:

Bylaws of Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (Effective 2020-21)
Bylaws of Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (As amended through Feb. 4, 2017)
Policies of UUSJ (Part 1, proposed 10-3-2020)
Motions for Adopting Governance Materials