

UUSJ Board Meeting September 4, 2020 Strategic Planning Session

Participants: J. Peterson (Accotink and Vice-Chair), Emily Koechlin (All Souls), Larry Underwood (Bull Run), Tanner Wray (Cedar Lane), Eleanor Piez (Mount Vernon), Pat Behenna (Paint Branch), Jack Lebowitz (River Road), David Shilton and Suzan Chastain (Arlington), Ken Mitchell (Baltimore), Terry Grogan (Reston), Bob McCarthy (Fairfax), Gary Magnuson (Frederick), Sean McCarthy (Rockville), Martha Ades, Serena Lowe, David Strauss (all At-Large), Bob Denniston (Chair), Charlotte Jones-Carroll (Secretary), John Gubbings (interim Treasurer), Pablo De Jesus (Executive Director), Evan Junker (Strategic Planning facilitator)

- The Secretary determined a quorum was reached (18 members, 11 = quorum),
- Evan Junker summarized strategic work to date by the board: Covenant, values, mission and vision, moral owners, and today, governance and ends.
- **Governance:** Sean McCarthy, chair of the governance team (other members = Emily Koechlin, David Strauss, Charlotte Jones-Carroll), summarized the report circulated earlier. The team had not only reviewed existing bylaws and policies of UUSJ but also best practices of similar organizations and literature in the field of governance. Observations about what needed to be changed include: right-sizing the board, which was now too large to be effective, shift to board members being accountable to the organization rather than to the congregation they represent, moving away from a working board to one focused on strategy, policy and funding, empowering the Executive Director to implement mission and program and assuring the board transitions toward national representation from the current DMV-area representation, along with greater diversity in ethnicity and age.
- Initial proposals for which the governance team sought feedback were:
 - Nine-to-eleven-member board, elected for three-year terms, renewable once
 - All trustees are “at-large,” elected by the existing board from recommendations of the Nominating Committee. No trustees named by congregations. Views of moral owners along with goal of diversity to be considered by Nom Comm during recruitment.
 - Membership continues to be either individual or congregational, per latest Board decisions, with dues to be set from time to time by board
 - Board focuses on strategic mission, policies, budget, finances
 - Executive Director and staff (including volunteer staff) implement programs
 - Board hires, evaluates and if needed, fires the Executive Director
 - Executive Committee, composed of the four officers, handles administrative tasks outside of board meetings. Any board-level decision is handled by board, with special meetings called if necessary (easier with smaller board)
 - Clear delineation of roles of board – trustees encouraged to participate in actions and events but not in leadership roles. Non-trustee volunteer staff encouraged to take on implementation roles under guidance of Exec Director
 - Any members of UUSJ who is not a trustee would be allowed to attend and make a short presentation at board meetings, before or after regular business items.
 - Could create a council to advise Executive Director, to give access to persons with skills not represented on board, or persons representing moral owners.
- **Feedback on Governance:** Board members shared the following reactions. Sean also indicated that further thoughts should be sent to him (for committee) by no later than Friday, Sept 11.

- Numerous comments in support of smaller board and ceasing congregational selection of trustees. Encouragement to address the valid concerns expressed by the governance team and not let comfortable ways keep us from where we need to go.
- KEY CONCERN: Need a clear plan for transitioning from the current composition to the proposed new composition.
- Do we change board and then go national, or go national first and then change board?
- KEY CONCERN: how does UUSJ keep congregations engaged, including making fair share contributions, if there is no longer a board member sent from that congregation? How about liaisons (not trustees) in each congregation (like UUSC?).
- How does UUSJ/Nom Comm assure that all the members of the new board won't come from one region or a few congregations? Will there be policies about diversity?
- KEY CONCERN: If board members are not supposed to be managing programs, how will the work get done? UUSJ staff is just a part time ED and AA, plus occasional contractors.
- Why lose the talents of alternate members, who provide another link to congregations (Sean: reduced size of board means no alternates, but interested volunteers are greatly needed to do program work, such as advocacy).

Next steps: Comments, including those sent by email before 9/11, will be considered and incorporated as appropriate by governance team. Resulting proposed revision to bylaws will be presented for consideration of Board at an upcoming meeting.

5. **Ends:** Evan Junker re-capped how “ends” figures into strategic direction: UUSJ will apply its MISSION to MORAL OWNERS in the direction of VISION, based on VALUES. Ends are intended to help us focus on priorities and budget use. He welcomes any thoughts at this meeting or sent to him via email or phone call. Right now, the team includes Bob Denniston and Peter Bishop, and Evan asked for a couple more volunteers (Suzan Chastain later volunteered). We can have different ends for different moral owners. Remember our mission includes engagement and education as well as advocacy.

Among suggested ends were:

- “UUs will have a well-thought out voice on issues that mean the most to them”
- “Impacted groups will have a trustworthy faith organization to advocate for them.”
- “Social justice organizations view UUSJ as a partner”
- “UUSJ talks with and learns from grassroots frontline workers on a regular strategic basis.”
- “Impacted communities or their representative organizations become involved in our advocacy work.” (but how do we achieve that?)
- “Impacted communities will have a partner that gives them an effective voice representing their priorities in national policies and actions. “
- “UUs and congregations, when asked how one gets advocacy done at the federal level, respond that UUSJ does this.”
- “UUSJ is seen as an honest broker on Capitol Hill and in Federal agencies, trusted by grassroots.”
- “impacted groups feel they are being seen and listened to by UUSJ”
- “We work with strategic partners to build movements”
- “UUs will have a partner with which to do work at the federal level and will feel a sense of agency”. Similarly, grassroots groups will feel a sense of agency because UUSJ works with them
- Clarify whose mission – “theirs” or “ours” (this will arise from accountable engagement, identifying mutual goals, use appreciative inquiry inter alia to get grassroots feedback). How measurable? Goals are the measurable tool, ends are not. Goals implement ends.

6. **NEXT STEPS:** Please volunteer for Ends team to work with Evan. Read materials Evan has provided, including 30-minute video on Appreciative Inquiry, in next couple weeks. Bob and Evan to agree on strategy item in agenda for Board meeting on October 3.

7. **Other items:** Pablo encouraged board members to look at action alerts and Write-Here-Write-Now brief for September advocacy immigration issue and take action (send letters). October 10 there will be a reprise of the storytelling-for-advocacy workshop. Please attend. Consider actions on environment for advocacy initiatives in October.

Charlotte Jones-Carroll, Secretary