

JUNE

ACKNOWLEDGING ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED: We have had a particularly challenging year as a board. We are also in the process of hiring multiple staff members and developing policy around employment. In order to process the issues and frame the tasks of the moment, we have selected training modules that directly relate to the issues and tasks at hand.

5. The Myth of Rationality: Understanding Human Nature

- a. Anxiety and the Brain
- b. The Self-Differentiated Leader
- c. The Temptation of Triangulation

- Acknowledge that change is difficult but remind the congregation of our vision and mission and how we worked hard, together, to create those. Now we are growing and changing in order to fulfil them.
- Publicize the board meetings and remind everyone that UUFM members are welcome to attend.
- Build opportunities for board members to be available to members - wear ribbons on our nametags that identify us, have a table where they can come talk to us during coffee after the service, ...
- Convey and establish the concept that "direct is kind." If you have questions or concerns, it's best for the well-being of the fellowship to bring them up directly with Pastor Isa or a board member. Acknowledge that difficult conversations can be uncomfortable, but they are better than rumors or festering concerns.

7. Good Boundaries: Balancing Transparency and Confidentiality

- a. Confidentiality and Healthy Disclosures
- b. Creating Healthy Communication Channels
- c. Avoiding "Parking Lot" Conversations
- d. The Peril of Anonymous Feedback

- We as a board should discuss UUA's recommendation that deliberations NOT be included in meeting minutes that are available to the fellowship.
- We acknowledge that the board meeting minutes are not up to date on our website (last post was Jan. 11, 2022).
- We're on the right track in improving our communications.
- Have more frequent communication from board to congregation about what the board is doing, maybe monthly.

- Add/reorganize the documents that describe the process of employee evaluation, feedback, and improvement plan
- Maybe set some parameters on what types of communications can be sent out on the Google group/listserv - announcements only, not airing of grievances. Remind fellowship members that if they have concerns, they should take them to the board.
- A blog might work as a way to moderate discussions.
- The board should model open communication and addressing issues/conflict head on in healthy ways.
- The board/ministry committee will not respond or act on anonymous feedback (different than confidential).
- Build a culture of addressing concerns head-on (having difficult conversations), as this is best for the health and well-being of the congregation (get rid of conflict avoidance).

9. Who's the Boss? Boards as Employers

- a. Our Values, Our Staff
 - b. Compensation Guidelines
 - c. The Unique Finances of Your Minister
 - d. Personnel Policies and Best Practices
- Noted how the assumption made in the section about values and diversity is that all UU congregations are predominantly white and privileged economically and/or in terms of education. Those of us newer to UUism found this interesting and somewhat in contrast to the congregational makeup of the faith traditions we were raised in. Did note that our fellowship's members do largely resemble the assumed demographic - lots of professors and folks with higher ed degrees, predominantly white. Somewhat assumed this might be due to our location in the middle of the country, but perhaps there is something more to it. Worth some reflection.
 - Discussed how intensive, detailed and dense the resources in this module were - very hard to get through all the material. Realized it's okay; that it's good enough to know that the nitty gritty is there for future reference as needed.
 - Appreciated compensation guidelines and reviewed the ways in which our treasurer has already taken UUA guidelines into account and incorporated them into the spreadsheet
 - We've relied on individuals to take care of staff issues (pay, taxes, etc...), which is a big job. We really should have a personnel committee.
 - It's the pastor's responsibility to conduct annual reviews with staff (Where Pastor functions as supervisor, Pastor conducts reviews.)
 - Ministers have a unique tax situation

JULY

This month we take a break from our typical church schedule with regards to Sunday Services. We are in a period of significant change for our congregation: post-pandemic and entering called ministry. It seems an appropriate time to also take a step back from the nitty gritty of Board responsibilities and do some spiritual grounding and revisiting of the mission and vision.

3. Finding Your Center: Spiritual Grounding as Leaders

- a. Covenant is Foundational to Unitarian Universalism
 - b. Shared Ministry
 - c. Lay Leadership as a Spiritual Practice
 - d. Practicing Intercultural Agility
 - e. Self-Care
- We liked the metaphor of dancing with a partner/dance floor etiquette for what we're experiencing now moving from somewhat lay-led to a full-time, called minister. We occasionally step on each others' toes, have missteps, but we keep moving forward together (give and take).
 - Liked the idea of having a covenant and stating a short version of it during services
 - [UUFM has a covenant on our website](#), but it's old and aimed at conflict resolution
 - We should develop a covenant for the congregation
 - "Covenant" is not a word or concept commonly used in our congregation, so we'll need to work on it and acclimate people to it
 - We think it would be a useful practice to bring in the concept of covenant
 - Note from Cathy: the term we used to use. "Norms" for how we deal with each other. We could include that in our attempt to describe covenant.
 - Covenants also help with setting and maintaining boundaries and space for self-care

4. Knowing Your Purpose: Leading in Alignment with Your Mission

- a. Understanding Mission and Vision
 - b. Leading from Mission to Action
 - c. Seeking Alignment with the Mission
 - d. Finding Your Prophetic Voice
- We like the mission-driven budget. The sample budget shown was rather complex. We may not need to do that, but we could ask everyone who creates a budget to think

about what activities their budget supports and if those activities support our mission. If the answer is "no," then maybe we should reallocate those funds somewhere else.

- Does the congregation know our mission? The board should continue to communicate the mission frequently.
- Leadership means sometimes making a stand. "Our covenant and polity demand that we take stands. To build a better world we must understand the bedrock we build this better world upon. Examining the motives for our actions and making sure that our actions are principle driven is a way to help us insure that we are building a better world." <https://www.uua.org/leaderlab/leadership-sometimes-means-taking-stand>
- Figure out how to create and support a culture of keeping our mission in mind with our actions
- Sometimes our work is done in what can feel like isolation, which is difficult and can cause anxiety
- Make sure you're not working at cross purposes. For example, if you want young families to attend, don't get upset about crying babies in the sanctuary.

6. In the Wilderness: Change is Hard, Even if it's the Promised Land

- a. Emotional Responses to Change
- b. Resistance to Change
- c. Technical vs. Adaptive Challenges
- d. Adaptive Challenges

- Found the idea of a technical challenge vs. an adaptive challenge interesting and informative
- unavoidable or unexpected change vs change as a choice - elicit different responses
- leadership and membership are often at different places on the roller coaster, reacting differently to change. The board and membership are often in staggered stages. It's important to listen to those at a different stage (especially when they're still on the downward fall and we're in the climbing up stage.) Listen and give them time.
- The brain's reaction to change is normal, but different for everyone. For early adapters, it's difficult to stop and listen to those adjusting more slowly, but it's important to stop and listen. The stress of change is valid and important.
- Everyone's experience of the roller coaster is different. It's important to say "I hear you. I understand you. Let's go together." You still have to do the thing (change), even if it's scary.
- What's hard is when people dig in and refuse to move/process. We can't push people up the roller coaster. They have to go up on their own. We can provide support but we can't make them go up if they don't want to.

- Technical vs. adaptive challenges: helpful framework to identify the problem and address it from the correct direction
- Working on a team - it's good to have a mix of people who jump into change and those who go more slowly. Good to have different perspectives.
- Going back to our covenant is important for the fellowship - the basis for addressing an adaptive problem. We have a lot of work to do yet on our covenant.
- It's important to listen without judging or trying to convince people to change - just listen and be sympathetic
- Again, became clear to us that covenant work with the congregation is important. They will likely be multiple covenants:
 - Pastor Isa -- board
 - Pastor Isa -- congregation
 - congregation -- congregation
 - board -- congregation

* Covenant is shorthand for how we [intentionally agree to] relate to each other.

AUGUST

BACK TO BASICS: We are nearing the end of summer and transitioning back to our routine/working time of the year. Let's review the basics with fresh eyes and get ready for the work ahead as a united front.

1. Call of Duty: Governance Basics

- a. Duties of a Board
 - b. 3 Parts of Effective Governance
 - c. Congregational Bylaws
 - d. Policies and Procedures
 - e. Being a Learning Community
 - f. Being Good Stewards of Time and Money
- Appreciated how this module framed the ways in which Congregational Boards effectively govern (i.e. we don't just sit around writing policy; effective governance involves governance by partnership, governance by conversation, and lastly, governance by policy)
 - Discussed the distinction between Bylaws (legally binding, voted on by the entire congregation) and Operational Policy (includes policies written, voted on and updated by appropriate governing bodies/committees, as well as procedures - same as processes? - that serve to maintain institutional knowledge and outline best practices. Discussed the

question of how it is determined what is in the bylaws vs. what is policy or procedure. Noted that our current Bylaws seem to fit the description in the module of what should be contained therein, and that our policies are housed in what is currently dubbed the Handbook, and our Procedures might be what we mean to clarify with our Processes Guide that is currently in the works.

- Touched on thinking of Congregation as a System. Particularly liked the bit about creating a culture that supports an Experi-fail approach and developing feedback loops so that we can learn from our experiments.
- Appreciated the practical suggestions of how to integrate practices that nurture and support a pro-active and visionary function for the Board. Talked about powerful questions, and what it would be like to spend 30 min. of the board meeting on them. A little daunted by the prospect of two monthly meetings, as suggested below during times of major change (which we are in).
 - common read
 - online course
 - consultant
 - first 30 min of meetings devoted to reflection and discussion around open-ended and powerful questions about the future
 - During periods of major change, a second monthly meeting
- Appreciated the discussion on being good stewards of time and money. Thought it was funny that they said “young people” tend to value their time, and “other people” tend to value taking the time to talk through things thoroughly. Green shades vs. Rose Colored glasses was also an amusing metaphor for the extreme ways of relating to money. In short: good reminder that all these perspectives are valuable and important, and the best outcomes come from listening to all of them.

2. In the Room Where It Happens: Why We Have Meetings

- a. Effective Meetings
- b. Setting the Agenda
- c. Making Room for Multiple Viewpoints
- d. Whole Congregation Decisions
- e. Whole Congregation Discernment

Appreciate division of task because hard to keep it all going at the same time.

- a. Effective Meetings: Important to be effective or otherwise feel as if wasting time.

These are things that we “mostly do,”

b. Setting the Agenda

- a. Having our google doc agenda with links is helpful to read in advance.
- b. Getting everything out in advance, having access, still needs work. Ie: reminders
- c. (Note: Executive Team meets a week in advance to set the agenda. (share with board so they know this.) 3 chairs (past, current, elect) and Pastor Isa.
- d. Consider: putting reminder out for board or congregation to see if they want to add items to the agenda. (In another training, make agenda accessible to the membership.)
- e. We are not getting membership involvement. It may be due to building communication or a culture issue: "We tend to trust the board to do what the board does...until we don't."

c. Making Room for Multiple Viewpoints: Maybe this is a place to start in building a relational meeting...more voices to be heard and valued that Robert's rules don't cover.

- a. It takes effort to change meeting culture, but participants glad we are addressing this.
- a. Reminder: change takes practice. Learning a new habit takes many repetitions.
- b. Takes less time to learn if doing this practice through play!
- b. It is structural change, but also relational.
- c. (Sociocracy/Dynamic Governance...still hard to wrap heads around.
- a. Hard to recognize Sociocracy elements because we are so used to old system. Seems chaotic because we aren't practiced in it. Takes time where everyone in the circle has confidence in own voice and is willing to share it. The more they get used to it, the more individuals can share quickly. (ie: a round-robin can be very quick.)
- b. Practice piece is the most daunting. Again...because trying to balance time and other commitments.
- c. In a Religious space...makes sense to practice new forms of engagement
Idea: structured board meeting is like teaching with a lecture. In classroom: we use multiple modalities, group share out, many more then get the content/idea. More learner engagement=more learning because needs are met.
Consider: Is it in the bylaws we must use Robert's rules...but we are also in the process of trying to shift.

d. Whole Congregation Decisions: We seem to be on top of this. Have structures.

- e. Whole Congregation Discernment: This is culture change. Especially since UU's tend to be a monoculture/academic based in our experience.
Glad we have a pastor eager to try new ways.
Thank you.

8. From "Me" to "We": Healthy Communications

- a. Speaking with One Voice
- b. Team Players: Interpersonal Dynamics
- c. Minutes and Records

a. Speaking with One Voice

Summary: our job is to come together and make decisions together as a group. This is not a majority rules situation. We are also not going for consensus exactly - we do not all have to agree 100%. We are going for thoroughly considered decisions that everyone can give informed consent to move forward with.

We discussed how sociocracy/dynamic governance conversations we've had with Pastor Isa and Mac Benavides have been helpful primers for understanding and engaging in this process.

Also discussed the important distinction between consensus and consent. Good Enough for Now, Safe Enough to Try.

b. Team Players: Interpersonal Dynamics

This section provides some best practices for team building

spend slow time together

covenant as a board

be right-sized

build trust

be in alignment with mission and vision

lean in to creative conflict

c. Minutes and Records

Discussed the challenge of finding that sweet spot that is not too much or too little information in the minutes. Talked about examples from other organizations where the minutes were so sparse you couldn't tell what happened, and other examples - mostly hypothetical - where the notes are so dense it's like reading a novel. This came up in a previous training as something to discuss as a board, as we are not sure if we've come to an intentional decision about how we want our minutes to be done. Suggest it might be incorporated into the board retreat.

SEPTEMBER

WORK IN PROGRESS: Clarifying roles, setting boundaries, strengthening relationships, and making plans for the work ahead.

10. Guarding the Institution: Balancing Stability and Vision

- a. Annual Planning
- b. Goals & Reporting
- c. Safety
- d. Systems of Trust and Accountability

11. A Strange Partnership: Governance and Ministry

- a. Styles of Governing Boards
- b. The Mission-Based Board
- c. Ministry as Partnership
- d. There's Enough Ministry to Go Around!

12. Staying in My Lane: Governance Roles and Responsibilities

- a. Officers and Executive Committees
- b. Standing Committees
- c. Open vs. Executive Session
- d. Understanding Boundaries

20230913 Board Training Review 9/13/2023

Emily Fraser, Dan Swenson, Dick Beeman, Cathy Hedge

Begin: 7:30

Elements of the training:

Section 10: Guardian the Institution: Balancing Stability and Vision

Section 11: A strange partnership: Governance and Ministry

Section 12: Staying in My Lane: Governance Roles and REsponsibilities

Annual Planning and Board Retreats:

DB. Example, seemed small and manageable. Like putting up a Black Lives Banner.

EF. Don't have to be big and lofty in order to achieve something. Helps us feel more productive when goal measurable and manageable. Okay to break it down.

DB. Visioning process shouldn't be to solve something. Shouldn't target an accomplishment.

EF. One question we will likely explore: What kind of governance to help people accomplish what they want to in the Fellowship?

Other areas: Safety in many realms and how to maintain a system of trust,

DS : We do need to think about safety of the building. Our building is remote and people are in the building by themselves.

DB. And one car in the parking lot signals a person is alone.

Cathy: we need to ask how people working in the building feel about it. (Their sense of safety.)

Dan: We do have a camera doorbell. But maybe Hannah doesn't have the app.

Dick: Part 10, Appreciates attitude of national UUA that there doesn't have to be a one-size-fits all. ie: Wisconsin didn't like the term covenant, they called them documentation of principles.

Dick liked that idea.

Emily: Noticed in covenant conversations...people have a need for it but doesn't have to be called covenant, but would need a conversation with Fellowship if wanted to change to another word.

Covenant is an Agreement of how we are relating to each other in different circumstances.

idea: One consideration is thinking of some who have experienced religious trauma. Maybe some see that word as triggering.

Model 11: Ministry and governing boards.

DB: Suggestion they made was 20-30 minutes just for visioning. Again: differing boards is okay

Ch: Would drive her crazy. (Short discussion of resistance is not because we want to focus on policy, but to get the job done.)

EF. 6 different kinds of boards ie: operational to strategic planning . All are valid and different communities need different ones. EF has Sense from both Jonalu and Pastor Isa: A desire to move our board away from just operational board. You can be any form, but still need to be tied to the mission.

Emily: Reminder: If you are writing policy but not doing anything with it, you need to start doing more of that visioning piece.

DB. Was reviewing old policies, a few errors, but no one notices.

EF. Addressing inconsistencies is important in policy...should actually reflect how we are doing things. So we can get a better sense of where we are and how we are doing.

DB. We do need specific guidance for volunteers and committee heads.

EF. Important to know what is your authority to do.

DB accountability as well as authority

CH. It will be interesting to see how circle governance works.

EF. Yes...responsibility can be heavy and isolating, so difficult to recruit a new person.

Appreciate with circles: more of a sense of a team of outgoing and incoming. Always someone ready to train, someone to learn, and someone to help. This will help with isolation and transitions. More of a connection between members Hopes this will work for the congregation. Appreciate board chair is

working that way. Hopes to do with treasurer. Need to break the cycle of how we currently do the committee structure. Finds it a longer period of time, but not as intense.

CH agreed. In an organization that followed the 3 year cycle. Working better so far.

Section 11

EF: Emily describes the different forms of some roles are needed legally. Others helper roles. Executive committees get things done between meeting. (How UUFM is doing this with Pastor Isa and the leadership team.)

Standing Committees...conversation, should they have been disbanded in our UUFM? Perhaps a conversation on committees needs to be held. le: Have we changed it to circles?

Feeling we still need to have committees.

EF: It is hard to recruit because people are so busy and involved. Hard to recruit because it feels like a lot to ask.

DB. Tier of 3, one problem is you do need to tell recruits that they will be the leader next year. Sunday Services must have a committee. Program committee: Just invited someone to come to the committee to visit and some stayed and became full time members. Maybe we should do another round of "just check it out." Need to expand volunteers.

DB. Does need to be certainty of who is on the committee, communication with all members important.

EF. We have a circle of Sunday Services and convening...lots of jostling about to make it function.

DB. Wonders if monthly convener meeting is necessary, for those who have convened frequently.

Ef: Open vs. Executive Sessions: We have opened up board meeting to all. Not taking up on it.

DB: Important to let people know that is available.

Ef: Wonders: What mode of communication gets through to people? Mail Chimp, newsletter, google group. Where do we need that information to be? This Sunday Emily will do update from the board on Sunday Service. Will Share minutes on the website.

EF: Understanding Boundaries.

No more questions.

Emily thanks all for attending.

Finish: 8:32