

Introduction to Policy Governance Questions Board Report

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A. Problem Statement

Our policy manual includes the following statements about the board's role and the relationships between the board, the minister, the staff and the congregation:

"Governance Process

"The UUCGT Board of Trustees commit to govern in a manner consistent with our Unitarian Universalist values. Through Policy governance [emphasis supplied] we intend to ensure that the congregation moves efficiently, consistently and ethically toward the realization of our mission and strategies while maintaining appropriate costs and avoiding unacceptable actions and situations."

"Board Minister Relationship Policies

"Global Relationship

The Board's connection to UUCGT operations is solely through the Minister. The Board will hold the Minister accountable for the operations of the organization, its achievements and its conduct.

The Board with the Minister carries forward our Mission.

"Delegation to the Minister

"The Minister is responsible for management of the Congregation's operations and is answerable to the Board of Trustees and to the Stakeholders.

"The policies in this section of the manual address how authority is delegated to the Minister and how the Board and Minister should work together.

"The Minister is authorized to establish all operational policies, make all decisions, take all actions and develop all activities that are true to the Board's policies."

These statements are consistent with the model of church governance known as *policy governance*. They are not consistent with how UUCGT functions nor

is it currently our goal to move in this direction. The fact that this language remains in our governance documents will cause confusion when it comes time to recruit a new settled minister. This is a problem which must be addressed by the board, preferably prior to the 2020 annual meeting.

B. Background Information

Policy governance is a model of organization for nonprofit organizations. It has many advocates and is widely used within the larger nonprofit segment, such as educational institutions, large foundations and medical service providers. Efforts have been made, most notably by Daniel Hotchkiss in his book titled *Governance and Ministry*, to adopt this model for church governance. It has proven to be effective in larger congregations with full-time professional staffs. It has not proven workable in congregations of our size or of a size to which we can reasonably aspire to grow in the next 5 years or so. The governance model which most closely parallels the way we currently aspire to operate is the committee centered model.

A common way to think about congregations of different sizes includes two definitions which are relevant to our situation. Pastoral congregations, consisting of between 50 and 150 members have been described as, "a coalition of two or three family and friendship networks unified around the person and role of the minister. The minister maintains a direct ministerial relationship with each member by coordinating the work of a small leadership circle, personally conducting worship, and leading small group programs such as adult religious study. The governing board usually operates like a committee, arranging much of the day-to-day life of the congregation. Members recognize each other's faces, know most people's names, and notice if someone new is present at worship."¹

A program size congregation consists of between 150 and 350 members. It has been described thusly: "The program size congregation is known for the quality and variety of its programs. Separate programs for children, youth, couples, seniors, and other age and interest groups provide entry points to congregational life for a wide range of people. The minister's crucial role is to recruit, equip, and inspire a small circle of key program leaders—lay and ordained, paid and unpaid. This ring of leadership might include the choir director, the director of religious education, the adult education director, and the new member committee chair. Working as a team with the minister, these leaders reach out to involve others as program participants and as leaders. The leadership circle shares broadly in decision making (among perhaps fifty people), and the laity share pastoral care."²

You will note that UUCGT membership has been dancing between the upper limit of a pastoral congregation and the lower end of a program congregation. One aspect of this theory is that it is necessary for congregations to grow their governance structure to fit their goal. If the governance structure does not evolve with the growth, growth will be stunted

and possibly reversed. That might be a partial explanation for what is transpired here over the last few years.

The most common form of church governance for program size churches is the committee centered model. In this model, the senior professional clergy reports to the board and provides regular direction to paid and volunteer staffs. Most of the work needed to carry forward the organization's mission is delegated to standing committees. The model is not without its limits. However, our existing method of operation most closely fits this model.

C. My Thoughts

I believe that our aspiration is to grow well beyond our current membership level. However, if the criteria for changing governance structure is based on membership size, we have a long way to go before we need to concern ourselves with out-growing the program size church model. I think our goal should be intentionally refine our existing structure in preparation for recruiting a new settled minister. If there is agreement on that point there will need to be significant changes made to our governance documents.

I have reviewed our bylaws. I do not believe that any changes to the bylaws will be needed to move in the direction of describing a committee centered governance structure. I have been through the manual and identified those areas which require attention. Maintaining the manual is a board responsibility, so the changes can be approved at the board level. I do not wish to carry on with the changes without conceptual support from the board.

D. One More Issue: Minister or Spiritual Leader?

My review of our governance documents did remind me that we have another significant policy question to discuss and resolve, namely whether to carry on with the title "spiritual leader" or to return to the title "minister" in describing that roll. At the moment, both terms appear in various places, but the bylaws consistently use the term "spiritual leader."

My personal opinion is that we should return to "minister" because that more accurately describes our expectations and probably fits the vocabulary of the ideal candidate better than "spiritual leader."

¹ Size Transitions in Unitarian Universalist Congregations, 2005
UUA publication, pg 5

² IBID