

Notes from Special Meeting; CLF Board, October 2005

Thursday, October 06

Present: Denny Davidoff, Frank Wells, Lorraine Dennis (executive director, staff), Laurel Amabile, Ken Gross, Jane Rzepka (sr. minister, staff), Lynda Bluestein, Iris Hardin (meeting clerk, staff), Tad Crawford, Brad Greeley, Harold Babcock, Lois Reborne, and Jerry Davidoff.

- Jane opened the meeting with her own piece, *Are You Real?*
- Denny's questions for us to consider for the afternoon: How do we (the Board) get the work of the CLF done? What *is* the work? What would happen if we *did* get the work done? She gave thanks to Tad Crawford for his willingness to start tackling these questions.
- Tad took the floor, asking what kind of church we are and what the new Board structure should be moving forward.
- A conference call was placed to Stefan Jonasson, UUA Coordinator of Services for Large Congregations, who said he would help us answer the following questions during the course of the afternoon: What kind of church are we? How do we become that church? How do our working groups work together to that end?

Group brainstorming:

I. What kind of church are we? (Crawford)

In what ways are we a church?

- We employ a minister.
- We're a gathering of people.
- We gather around large issues of Life.
- We have programmatic offerings and religious education.
- We all subscribe to an identification as Unitarian Universalists.
- We ask for money. We depend on donations.
- We have a common faith.
- Social Action.
- We are a recognized congregation within the denomination.
- We have a recognized structure.

What makes us unique?

- We explain more about UUism.
- We are geographically dispersed.
- Members' involvement is more compartmentalized.

- We provide diverse ways to connect.
- We do not have music.
- We publish a spiritually-focused publication as an alternative to worship.
- No prevailing, dominant culture relative to how to belong.
- More inclusive than bricks and mortar churches – we support those socially unable to be in churches; religious professions; those economically unable, etc.
- Different relationship between us and our givers.
- No building.

In what ways are we a large church?

Since we can't define active participation relative to what happens on Sunday morning, how do we define it for CLF?

- We have a high need for preparation. Things can't happen casually.
- Number of people involved in membership.
- Our diversity.
- We're almost mega-church like in that participation of only 10% of the congregation accounts for 90% of resources (\$ and time).

(Note: In large churches, closer to 20% of the congregation donates 50% of the resources, another 30% of the congregation donates 30% of the resources, and 50% donates the final 20% of the resources. These numbers are from Stefan.)

In what ways are we not like a large church?

- Number of clergy and staffing level are lower.
- Our funding is not abundant.
- Stefan says there are basically two kinds of cyber churches – (1) “*Cyber Quack*” (a soloist on the Internet), and (2) something sponsored by an existing land-based megachurch (e.g., Saddleback has a cyber church). CLF is neither. (There's a third type that is growing; that is one sponsored with denominational funding. For example, the United Methodist has an online “church at home.” Cyber evangelism is not the same as being a cyber church.)

How do we look like a “cellular” church? (i.e. build around small groups)

- While we have small groups, they currently are not the core building blocks of CLF, but could be.
- There is also some question as to whether our groups can offer what face-to-face groups can achieve. Are they sufficiently familial, intense, helpful, coaching?
- In Saddleback (a large megachurch in Orange County, CA), by way of contrast, small groups have a dual mission – to support each other *and* to

save souls in Christ. It's not enough for members to be there for each other. The cells also have a mission/vision. What should be the compelling vision/mission for our small groups?

What, if anything, should bind us?

- We have 2 classes of potential members – those who know about UUism and want to affiliate and those who discovered UUism through our web site and want to be saved
- What binds us? Our value-centered religion. But we have to get people to do something, not just feel something. Should we not have a clearer social agenda?
- Some members like being unbound, but associated.
- How do *we* save?
- We have a high staff/low volunteer model. How do we ask volunteers to *engage*?
- Cellular churches use a viral model with paid staff and volunteers. Cells keep replicating without significant staff involvement after they are launched. Their glue is in the cells, not necessarily worship. Pastoral care is happening in the cells.
- We have cells, but we may not yet have enough glue.

II. How should the CLF Board function? In a “volunteer staff” capacity or more like a policy-making Board? (Crawford)

Stefan asked to what extent is the CLF Board functioning in a *volunteer staff* vs. a *policy-setting* capacity. According to Stefan, if we want more of a policy-making Board, we need to make a sharper distinction between the two functions. He suggested, for the purpose of clarity, that we reserve the word “Committees” for Board-level groups and the term “Working Groups” (WGs) to refer to congregational groups functioning in a volunteer staff capacity. (This is not UUA language. This is language used by Stefan in a chart he provided us to clarify the differences between the two kinds of groups and how they are accountable. See Attachment 1.)

In Stefan's model, Board committees are recruited from and appointed by the Board; the work largely involves planning and policy development. Board committees are accountable to the full Board and, ultimately, the congregation.

A Working Group (WG), on the other hand, is not concerned with governance structure; rather, it is focused on program planning, implementation and ministry. It is appointed by the minister and senior staff, and it is accountable to them. Board members, in this case, are expected to function as volunteer staff, since they aren't doing Board work.

Since Stefan's model showed the Minister and Board are at the same level, Denny asked who evaluates the Minister? Stefan responded that the Board should

conduct a peer review of the Minister, but Laurel pointed out that the CLF bylaws don't support that. Unlike most congregations, our bylaws state that the minister is called by and serves at the pleasure of the Board. Tad pointed out that Stefan's model was not meant to define how our minister is called or evaluated, etc. The intent was to clarify the roles and accountability of Board members when performing Working Group vs. Committee/Board work. Stefan had initially created the chart assuming full congregational polity. CLF is organized more like a non-profit than a UUA congregation. It may have to adopt a hybrid version of the model.

Following this discussion, we went through the Functions and Activities on the chart Tad prepared following our April Board meeting (See Attachment 2.):

Membership Development & Coordination – It was concluded that this function should be accountable to Jane

Funding – This function should also be accountable to Jane

There was much discussion around who should be making calls to lead givers. Brad suggested that the Board members covenant to make the 40-50 calls the staff have designated. The CLF Board will be members of a Canvass Working Group. Staff will recommend other members of this WG.

On-Line Ministry & Lifespan RE -- Function accountable to Jane

CYF – Currently a Board Committee; should ultimately become a Working Group.

Board Structure & Staffing – This is a Board Executive Committee function.

Budget – Jane suggested a hybrid approach. It was concluded that a Board-level Finance Committee is needed.

New Initiatives --How do we deal with new initiatives? For example, what if someone says there should be a new way to log into the web site?

- It was suggested that when a new idea percolates up through volunteers or the staff to Jane, Jane should determine if it's a good idea and assign it to a Working Group, if necessary. Otherwise, she should communicate why the idea (even if it's a great one) can't be carried out. The Board should weigh in only if the initiative represents a significant opportunity not envisioned in the strategic plan (e.g., CYF).

Other Conclusions

- Some Board Committees should be standing (e.g., Strategic Planning), others Ad Hoc.
- Committees are not open to non-Board members. WGs are.

- Most of the functions associated with the ECC are really staff functions. Lois concurred. Therefore, it should not be a Board-level Committee, but is not yet a Working Group. The responsibility for addressing its functions lies with Jane. It was suggested that the Board withdraw the charge to the ECC.
- Visiting the web site should be part of the Board members' responsibilities.
- Engaging geographically dispersed WG members is very challenging. WGs work best when participants can meet together in the same room at least once (for the launch).

Recap of the afternoon: (Tad)

All the discussion that took place after April meeting made it clear that everyone has different ideas about what kind of church we are, how we should be functioning, what kind of models we should be using, what our duties are as a Board, staff, volunteers, volunteer Board members, etc. Tad's conclusions from the meeting and conversations w/ Stefan are that, although all congregations *think* they're different, the CLF *is* different! We are a hybrid church, and we need to draw in many models relative to how we function pastorally, financially, from a Board perspective....

The second thing we spent a lot of time talking about was how the Board should function. We talked about the fact that most of the Board Working Groups (WGs) we discussed in April should really be WGs under Jane's authority.

We also talked about diversity in small group ministry. We concluded that, while we (UUs) have typically encouraged small groups to reflect the full diversity of our congregations, there is real value in allowing small CLF groups to have a measure of uniformity or self-declared affinity, so that people within individual groups can gather easily around shared interests and common experience. (In fact, in the absence of face to face contact, it is hard for us to discern much of our diversity.)