

From the President

Policy Governance in the Metro NY District

Last spring, the Metro NY District Board voted to adopt the Policy Governance model for conducting the business of the District. Under this model, developed by John and Miriam Carver, the roles of board and staff are defined in a way which encourages each to excel at what it does best, with maximum accountability.

A Policy Governance board is accountable to the organization's "owners". In the Metro NY District, the owners are our 51 constituent UU congregations in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. The base line for accountability is that the organization "works". In Policy Governance terminology, another way of saying this is that the "ends" of the organization are being achieved. Policy Governance requires the board to identify the ends of the organization and to delegate power and responsibility for their achievement to an executive, who is accountable solely to the board. Subject to board-prescribed limitations, the executive is empowered to use any reasonable means to achieve the organization's ends. The board is charged with constantly monitoring the executive to determine that ends are being achieved and that no unacceptable means are being used. The Metro NY District Board has delegated this power and responsibility to a two-person Executive Team, made up of our Congregational Services Consultant, Harry Green, and our Religious Education Program Consultant, Andrea Lerner.

Identification of organizational ends is an ongoing process for a Policy Governance board. At a retreat held last spring, the Metro NY District Board identified three preliminary ends for the District: (1) that District congregations are healthy, effective, accessible and diverse; (2) that District congregations have empowered professional and lay leaders; and (3) that there be cooperation and action among District congregations. Now we are in the process of refining those ends and perhaps identifying others. Since this cannot be done without input from the District's owners, the District Board is conducting its regular meetings at different sites around the District and inviting lay and professional leaders from area congregations to engage in conversations about organizational ends. The first of these meetings took place at Manhasset, LI in September. Future meetings will be at East Brunswick, NJ on December 10 and at Ridgewood, NJ on March 11, 2006. Please refer to the announcements on the District website for details.

This brief description barely scratches the surface in explaining how Policy Governance works. I know from conversations I have had with congregational leaders that there is a keen interest in how this model might work at the congregational level. If you wish to learn more, I encourage you to look at the Policy Governance section of the UUA website (visit <http://www.uua.org/interconnections/policy/>) and to join the Policy Governance e-list that the UUA has established (visit <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/policygovernance-1>).

The Metro NY Board, our Executive Team and I look forward to your input as we continue to implement Policy Governance in the District.

In peace,

Jerry Muntz, District President