

## **FIRST UU AUSTIN BOARD/CONGREGATION LINKAGE PLAN TRANSITION TO POLICY BASED GOVERNANCE PHASE TWO**

The attached linkage plan is a product of recommendations from our board, a review of best linkage practices of UU congregations that have transitioned to policy governance and consultation from Unity Consulting. According to Unity Consulting, the focus of board linkage in Phase Two is as follows:

- Present Ends and receive feedback
- Continue strategic conversations about the transition
- Hone linkage practices

The Executive's linkage work in Phase Two is to initiate conversations about how to structure the congregation's ministries to work within the model and achieve the Ends.

### **Linkage Questions**

The activities we include in our linkage plan should be those that best enable us to answer these 3 questions:

**What conversations should we be having with our moral owners during this year?**

**Which proposed activities would best support these conversations?**

**What will we learn about serving our linkage role by doing each?**

We are also reminded by Unity Consulting that **linkage is largely the art and skill of intentional questioning and listening**. In meeting with our congregants we should expect that they will start with personal experiences and opinions/suggestions about concrete operational or programmatic matters. As board members we should develop the skill at posing questions that yield insight into values and ends (or vision).

Any linkage event needs to intentionally start with the concrete and find a way to build on it. People need time to talk about their personal experiences before they'll be ready to move beyond them to bigger picture ideas. However, if we allow the conversation to stop with the concrete we run the risk both of failing to receive feedback on our Ends and duplicating the linkage work of the Executive.

### **Informal Linkage Activities**

The informal linkage plan includes 4 Brown Bag with the Board activities, one per quarter with 2 being brown bag lunches after the second service and 2 being brown bag brunches before the first service. These will offer opportunities for congregants to meet informally with the board for conversations in a setting less hectic than the gallery or the foyer. To make this linkage meaningful we will need to develop our skills at posing questions that yield insight into values and ends (see above).

### **Formal Linkage Activities**

The FUUCAFE is based on a World Café conversational process which is a methodology for hosting conversations about questions that matter. The methodology includes 3 sets of conversations for participants seated at tables in groups of 4 to 5, similar to the

arrangements for Bridge to the Future sessions. The World Café methodology requires participants to move to other tables at 20 minute intervals. The total time for questions and conversations is approximately an hour. We will host 3 FUUCAFE's during the year with questions related to our mission and ends: one for nourishing souls, one for transforming lives and one for doing justice. The World Café model will give us the best opportunity to have direct conversations with our congregants and receive thoughtful feedback about our ends.

Communication with the congregation and education about PBG is the most frequently mentioned challenge of PBG cited by congregations that responded to the Policy Governance Survey. The All Council training for church leaders scheduled for 9/26, a leadership class on PBG to begin after conclusion of Harvest the Power, newsletter articles and maintenance of PBG information on our website are all efforts to ensure communication and education of the congregation. The leadership class on PBG will be helpful to the Nominating Committee in selecting persons to be nominated for new board positions as well as to persons interested in being nominated.

### **Feedback**

The World Café methodology has a built in feedback process because notes are taken during the conversations.

The PBG Task Force is developing an electronic process for each board member to report on a regular basis on their informal linkage conversations. These reports will be summarized by the task force with trends and themes identified and shared at each board meeting. This will require changing the board agenda to allow time for presentation and discussion of the reports. Under PBG, linkage is one of the primary responsibilities of the board. It stands to reason that time should be set aside in board meetings for this purpose.