

First UU Austin
Policy-Based Governance Workshop
Sept 26, 2010

First UU Governance History

As our church has grown into a larger congregation various leadership teams have been looking into more effective Governance Models that will provide the foundation for our growing Mission. We have looked at a variety of governing models used by other churches and organizations and Policy-Based Governance (PBG) has come up time and again as the best possible model. We are now finally implementing the recommendations of numerous past boards, committees and task forces. To name a few:

- Roseanne Reeser stated that Policy Governance first came up in 2000 and there was a great deal of enthusiasm for it but did not have the staffing to enact it at that time.
- Don Smith, board president in 2003, stated that the board had already committed to changing to a Policy Governance model when he first joined the board in 2001. The only reason the board did not follow through, in his opinion, was it was difficult to find the time to write the policies to enact it while the board was still functioning as a “working board”.
- In 2003 the Strategic Planning Committee recommended more staff so that we could move to “Policy-making Board Structure”.
- In our meeting with District Representative Stefan Johansen in October of 2007 it was already spoken of as a direction that we had chosen and were attempting to implement, so the question at that meeting was “how we can implement Policy Governance.”
- In the summer of 2008 the Policy Governance Task Force looked into models of PG of three churches and recommended that we adopt Policy Governance First UU.
- The recommendation to hire an Executive Director made in 2008 was in large part a move to implement Policy Governance.
- After the church identified *Mission* and *Governance* as two key areas to work on through the Dr. Steinke Bridge Builders report, a sub-group of the board began in Jun 2009 to study good governance practices for a congregation of our size.
- Board members attended governance training at the General Assembly, through our district etc. and through reading and studying materials from the UUA, the Alban Institute, etc.
- We contacted several governance consultants and selected Joe Sullivan from Unity consulting to assist us with our transition. We also invited in Stefan Johnsson, Director of Large Congregations for the UUA to speak to the church.
- The board began to make governance study and governance training and study a regular part of our board meetings leading up to a Philosophy of Governance statement.
- This slow, intentional process lead to the recent adoption of policy-based governance as the model we would pursue.

First UU Austin *Philosophy of Governance*

Governance at First UU Church of Austin shall support our shared ministry, reflect our UU principles and release the full potential of our people.

To do so, our elected, representative Board of Trustees will engage in ongoing, meaningful conversations with members of the church (and others to whom we are accountable) to continually focus the work of the board on our shared values and purpose.

The board will govern in a manner that:

- Clarifies accountability, authority and responsibility so that staff and volunteers are empowered to reach their full promise in pursuit of our shared purpose;
- Is flexible and always improving;
- Encourages creativity and examining the bigger picture;
- Strives for excellence but recognizes that true excellence is often a stepwise process of continual monitoring and refinement;
- Strongly connects the congregation and leadership;
- Focuses on governing by policy;
- Keeps the board in covenant with one another and with the congregation

PBG Governance Milestones 2010 - 2011

Feb 2010 ✓ 1.5 Day Governance Workshop led by Joe Sullivan for the board.

Mar 2010 ✓ Formed the Governance Task Force (meets weekly to manage our governance improvement process)

Apr 2010 ✓ *Bridge to Our Future* sessions to gather values and mission data from the congregation

Jun 2010 ✓ 1 Day Board Retreat led by Joe Sullivan to synthesize data from the *Bridge to Our Future Sessions* into *First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin Values, Mission and Ends*

Jul 2010 ✓ Presentation of *Values, Mission and Ends* to congregation at worship service

Jul 2010 ✓ Board vote to adopt and transition to Policy Based Governance

Aug 2010 ✓ Board vote to adopt the *Single-Executive Model* (to be effective with calling of settled minister)

Sep 2010 ✓ Board vote to adopt Board Linkage Plan. Linkage includes methods for the board to connect with and listen to the moral owners of the church, to hear what they have to say and to represent them effectively.

Nov 2010 1.5 Day Board *Policy Writing Picnic* led by Joe Sullivan. The board will create the initial set of governance policies.

TBD 2011 Board Retreat to continue work on operation of Policy Based Governance

TBD 2011 After the arrival of our settled minister in 2011, the formal switch to PBG governance!

Beyond Board will continue to refine policies, maintain accountability, and liberate the creativity of First UU in pursuit of our shared purpose. Our minister will work with the congregation and staff to shape our ministries in order to bring our Values, Mission and Ends to life.