

MEMO

To: Board of Trustees

From: Governance Committee

Re: Ends Replacement

Date: January 14, 2022

1. Background

The Board of Trustees has tasked the Governance Committee with recommending what to do in light of the terming-out of the church Ends adopted in 2016. Based on the Committee's research and discussion we recommend that in lieu of adopting a new set of Ends, First UU implement a process resulting in the adoption of Annual Visions of Ministry ("AVM") as described by Dan Hotchkiss in his book, "Governance and Ministry." [Hotchkiss is a senior consultant at the Alban Institute and has written extensively on church governance. The AVM process is described further below.]

As part of our research, the Governance Committee looked into the status of Ends among comparable Midwestern UU congregations. It appears that while some congregations still use the Ends process, it does not represent the majority. There are a variety of goal-setting and success-measurement tools in use, including relying on annual implementation of priorities based on church mission and vision statements and covenants while other congregations incrementally implement specific long-term planning goals. [See Appendix A for details on congregations reviewed.]

Hotchkiss' AVM process is straightforward. The Board creates two major products – a set of 1-3 "Open Questions" about the church's future and an Annual Vision of Ministry of 1-3 goals for the coming church year.

2. Open Questions

"Open Questions" are localized, specific versions of basic questions faced by any congregation – Who are we? What do we want to be and do? Who is our neighbor? They are future-oriented. The idea is to ask these questions of members (and perhaps of church staff as well) in order to inform future Board decisions, particularly in the development of the Annual Vision of Ministry.

Examples of Open Questions raised by actual congregations and supplied by Hotchkiss include:

- What is our "brand?" How do we wish to be known by others in the city?
- What is our ministry to people in our community outside the walls of our church?
- What groups of people that we are not now reaching do we mean to reach? What special efforts will we take to reach them?
- As we make significant changes, how will we meet the needs of the current members?

- What are the core values that will shape our stewardship of money, and how shall we express those values in our future budgets?

Hotchkiss suggests getting congregational input on the Open Questions by inviting members to events at which they can talk about the Open Questions and express other ideas and concerns. The events might come in the form of large gatherings with roundtables for table by table input, in focus groups of members who have something in common (e.g., parents of school-age children), smaller gatherings in members' homes, and even a "town hall" style meeting – a meeting at which the entire congregation is invited akin to the Annual Meeting, but at which no decisions will be made and no specific action taken.

3. Annual Vision of Ministry

The Annual Vision of Ministry is developed by the Board based on the input it receives from the congregation and staff, not only as to the relevant Open Questions, but on other issues as well. In addition, the Board must also consider the wider environment (e.g., a pandemic....). An AVR might be adopted to accomplish some aspect of a multi-year plan. It might also address something that could possibly be accomplished to completion in the church year (e.g., a church renovation, or, making the church building more accessible).

Attached to this Memo is a PDF of a page from "Governance and Ministry" including a chart setting out a set of Open Questions and related AVM's adopted by a fictitious church. Two major issues are addressed in the example: 1) how a church located in one city might reach out to build a second church in a close-by town; and, 2) how the church can build an effective youth program. Note how the AVM's address those questions.

Also attached is a PDF of a flow chart in which Hotchkiss shows where the Open Questions and Visions of Ministry fit in the formation of a church's annual cycle of Governance and Ministry.

4. How the AVM process might commence at First UU

Hotchkiss' plan envisions a church adopting the Open Question/AVM process to begin by posing an Open Question or two to the Congregation in the months prior to the beginning of a new church year. The Board would use the input provided from the congregation on those Open Questions to plan its first Annual Vision of Ministry.

An example of how this might work at First UU:

- February '22 Board meeting #2 – Board discusses possible "Open Questions" to consider prior to first March Board meeting.
- March Board meeting #1 – Board adopts Open Question(s) and sets out a plan of how to communicate them to the congregation along with a plan for a series of 2-3 meetings at which church members may provide input. Board also considers whether seeking staff input on the Open Questions would be advisable.

- Late March through April – Meetings are held to provide the Congregation opportunity for input on the Open Questions. Meetings are facilitated by Board members and extensive notes are taken (and meetings recorded).
- June – At the church Annual Meeting a segment is devoted to a Board member presenting the input provided by the Congregation (perhaps the staff as well) on the Open Question(s) and stating that the Board will take this into consideration in developing its initial Annual Vision of Ministry at its Annual Retreat in the summer.
- At its Retreat the Board develops the Annual Vision of Ministry for that church year and may also set the Open Question(s) to be considered by the congregation throughout the year to provide input for development of the AVN for '23-'24.

An issue for further consideration -- Whether to incorporate this process into the budget process for 2022-23 is a Board decision. However, we would discourage the Board from combining the AVM and budgetary processes as the AVM process requires time for extended focus on the Open Questions posed whereas the budgeting process includes consideration of a multitude of issues of various import. In addition, an Open Question may relate to an issue that is budget-neutral and not really relevant to a budget discussion. The Committee stands ready to assist the Board in anyway needed as you consider how to proceed.

5. How to measure success without the Ends

In reality, the Ends Statements were not really used to “measure” success at First UU. Rather, they were used descriptively in the Senior Minister’s monthly Board reports to demonstrate how church activities aligned with the Ends. The Committee recommends that the Board consider replacing the Ends as a frame of reference in this regard by, instead, looking at the degree to which church activities foster accomplishment of the Annual Visions of Ministry, and the church Mission and Vision.

6. Church Documents that reference First UU’s Ends Statements

Finally, you asked the Committee to review references to the Ends Statements in church documents and processes. After a close review of the church website, the following were identified:

A. *Bylaws* – there is one reference, in Article IV, Section 3(a), which requires proposed Resolutions to identify where the proposed action fits with the Ends Statements.

B. *Policies*:

1) *Governing Policies* – There are ten sections in Articles II, III, and IV that reference the Ends. [E.g., “the Executive Team may not cause or allow fiscal projections that (d)eviate materially from Board-stated priorities and requirements (see Ends policies) in its allocation among competing fiscal needs” – Art. II, Policy C.]

2) *Building Use Policy* – Requires activities to be consistent with church Ends Statements.

3) *Budget Process* – Initial budget roundtables with congregation “to discuss ideas for new or expanded initiatives that support our Ends (and Mission & Vision, once finalized).”

4) *Fundraising* – Activities supported by fundraisers must meet “the principles of Unitarian Universalism and the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines Ends Statements.”

The Committee will prepare a detailed recommendation for the Board’s consideration as to how we might edit all of the references noted above.

Appendix A: How Other Midwest UU Congregations of a size akin to First UU deal with annual or long-term goal identification, accomplishment, and evaluation

A. Congregations still using Carver Ends/Means:

- Unity Unitarian – St. Paul – They have adopted a) Values statement, b) Mission statement, c) Ends – (8 Ends in all). <https://www.unityunitarian.org/>
- First Universalist Church – Minneapolis – a slight deviation from Ends. They have adopted 1) Core values statement, 2) mission statement, c) visionary goals (that read very much like Ends). <https://firstuniversalistchurch.org/>

B. Congregations that focus on Mission, Vision, and Covenant, with no reference to Ends:

- UU Church of Urbana-Champaign – Mission and Vision but no Ends. The Mission Statement goes back to '05, and was reaffirmed more recently, the Vision Statement is relatively new. <http://uucuc.org/>
- Omaha First Unitarian – Mission, Vision, Covenant (no sign of Ends), followed by a focus on the Seven Principles – real clean and clear. Second Unitarian Church there is similar. <https://www.firstuomaha.org/>
- Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Topeka – Mission, Vision, and Covenant. <https://uuft.org/>
- Unitarian Universalist Society – Iowa City/Coralville – Mission, Vision, Covenant of Right Relations. Church has a 195-page [Policies and Procedures Manual](#) that includes these major sections: Bylaws, Policies, Procedures, Personnel Manual, Communications Policies, Facilities Use Guide, Form, and Snapshot View (consisting of a quite-detailed organizational chart). Section 2, “Policies,” begins with a summary of the church’s form of governance, describing it as “Shared Ministry Governance.” It notes this involves written polices to delegate the Board’s authority to staff and congregation, they say, as explained in Hotchkiss’ “Governance and Ministry.” See p. 23. Finally, UUSIC adopted a detailed [Strategic Plan](#) in 2013. It includes five mains goals and a dozen objectives fitting under the goals. It notes (on p. 6) that it was to be a Three-Year Plan. Yet, it remains featured on their website. <https://www.uusic.org/>

C. Congregations with spare aspirational statements:

- First Unitarian Society of Madison – Only a mission statement. <https://fusmadison.org/>

D. Strategic Planners:

- Abe Lincoln UU Church – Springfield – Strategic Vision including 10-year goals, choosing those to prioritize in 18-month segments. <https://www.uua.org/offices/organizations/abraham-lincoln-uu-congregation>

