

Congregational Life Regional Advisory Councils

VISION & PURPOSE:

Regionalization is unfolding in a variety of ways across our movement. Within these differing models, there are some common trends. Many district and regional boards are shifting away from direct staff supervision and operational oversight. This shift is making way for greater alignment with our UUA ends and clearer lines of accountability between field staff and our Director of Congregational Life (DCL). However, this shift also leaves a “feedback gap” between our local congregations and our Congregational Life/Regional staff. This is especially true in regions where district boards dissolve or repurpose themselves as fiduciary bodies. Congregational Life Advisory Councils seek to fill that gap and ensure robust avenues for congregational input about regional services. This method of stakeholder outreach supports strong accountability to stakeholders and provides our DCL and regional staff with essential feedback about the unique needs and aspirations of our diverse regions.

With this vision in mind, the primary role of Congregational Life Advisory Council members is “Ambassador to Stakeholders.” They ensure that the covenantal relationships and “connective tissue” between regional stakeholders and our regional UUA staff remains strong and vibrant. As such, Advisory Council members need to have strong listening skills and a passion for relationship building. While the personal wisdom and perspective of Advisory Council members are valued, their central task is to solicit the wisdom and perspectives of our regional stakeholders.

VALUES

Responsiveness to “local” (district & regional) needs, challenges and opportunities

- *We value local context in the achievement of our UUA ends.*
- *We believe that Congregational Life strategic priorities and programming should be accountable and responsive to the unique needs, challenges and opportunities of congregations and beyond as well as our UUA ends and the UUA President’s strategic plan.*

Relational & Covenantal Accountability

- *We believe that being in relationship with the DCL as advisors and stakeholder ambassadors will provide a robust level of accountability. It is the type of relational accountability that our covenantal faith tradition upholds.*
- *It is important to remember that, in addition to this “relational accountability,” the DCL is organizationally accountable to the democratically-elected UUA board through the office of the UUA President.*

Regional Flexibility

- *We recognize that regionalization will take different forms in different regions. Thus, the membership of and selection process for Congregational Life Advisory Councils will be “regionally specific.” For instance, District and Regional Boards will likely choose to be involved in the selection of the Advisory Council members in a variety of ways.*

Diversity of Perspectives

- *In addition to recruiting existing, elected congregational leaders, we will recruit Advisory Council members that serve in no elected role but instead represent and have access to crucial demographics whose wisdom and perspective is sometimes marginalized or underrepresented.*

Singular & Supported Supervision of Staff

- *We are striving for a system that provides regional staff with a singular source of accountability and supervision. While staff is ultimately accountable to our congregations, we understand the value of entrusting the DCL with direct oversight of the Congregational Life staff.*
- *We recognize that the DCL needs stakeholder support and input in order to carry out this oversight in a way that takes the unique needs, challenges and opportunities of the districts and regions into account. This is true even in regions that retain governing boards and share oversight with the DCL.*

Institutional Sustainability

- *To ensure that this relational accountability remains in place regardless of who serves the role of DCL, we will find ways to institutionalize Congregational Life Advisory Councils. For instance, we will ensure that Congregational Life Advisory Councils are built into regional covenants, with them being a commitment that the UUA administration makes, not just a commitment a particular DCL makes.*

FORM

Primary Responsibility:

- *Serve as ambassadors to regional stakeholders, helping to ensure that the Director of Congregational Life and Regional Teams have the input needed to develop service strategies and priorities that take local congregational needs, aspirations and opportunities into account.*

Structure:

- *6-8 members per region.*
- *Original membership will be decided by existing district/regional boards in collaboration with the DCL and RL.*
 - *In order to strengthen current covenantal connections, a significant portion of Congregational Life Advisory Council members will be drawn from existing elected congregational leadership positions, such as congregation boards, executive committees of regional professional groups or cluster leadership. During this time of*

transition, it may make sense to have some district/regional board members serve on the council.

- We will also recruit individuals who serve in no congregation-elected role but instead represent and have access to crucial demographics whose wisdom and perspective is sometime marginalized or underrepresented.*
- To better empower the Council, we will give strong consideration to having boards recruit only the first four members of the Council, leaving it to the DCL and Council to recruit and select the remaining four members.*
- We will consider having district/regional assemblies “bless” or “commission” Congregational Life Advisory Council members after they are selected.*
- Outreach schedule and format will be decided by the DCL and Advisory Councils, with input from the district/regional boards.*
- The various Regional Advisory Councils will periodically come together to take a national perspective supporting the DCL in thinking about cross-regional issues.*

RELATED NOTES:

- Congregational Life Advisory Councils are only one type of advisory group that needs to be developed.
 - The UUA board also carries out a governance linkage process between it and congregations. This is distinct from the Advisory Council's focus on operations and feedback about particular regional services.**
- As Congregational Life Advisory Councils take over the advisory & ambassador role, and as some regions dissolve or repurpose themselves as fiduciary boards, the purpose and structure of the DPA will likely evolve. However, given that Congregational Life Advisory Councils are focused on operations and the DPA is focused on governance, there is nothing in this proposal that requires change or elimination of the DPA.*

This vision statement was originally developed in March of 2014 by:

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