

# Governance Dialogue - Council of Conference Ministers 2/23/10

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## Context/Setting:

Conversation around tables, groups of 6-8 Conference Ministers at each table. Questions from the Dialogue and Discernment Process were the focus of the conversation.

Jim Antal introduced the discussion topic, and facilitated the reporting at the conclusion of the conversations. Yvette Flunder was also present and offered helpful comments.

Section I: Each table submitted a summary of their responses to the questions which are listed below, in random order.

Section II: Comments in discussion by whole group at end of the process.

Bob Witham, Administrative Coordinator for CCM, compiled the summary.

## **Section I: Reports from the Groups**

### **Question 1: What is your response for the United Governance Working Group?**

#### **Group A:**

- There is nothing to respond to; this is just a summary of where we've been.
- Re "32 additional Synod delegates from HUGS (p. 9): Who appoints them? How are they distributed?"
- Re "30 special delegates, to be selected according to criteria yet to be determined" (p. 9): Who are these? Who appoints? Criteria?
- Re: "Expertise and skill sets are needed for committee work. . ." (P. 10): Why is this here?
- Why are only Executive Committee and Financial Investment in single governance? It really comes down to "flexibility."
- But, what is lost in giving up multiple Boards? And how/where does this document ??? instigating those loses?

#### **Group B:**

- Feeling we're trying to put old stuff into new forms
- Concerns:
  - Not convinced that single Board contributes to effective government; the tension between Boards is good.
  - This will drastically reduce representation/voice/buy-in from Conferences
  - Move towards hierarchical system is not good
  - Cleveland will become much further away from Conferences and local churches.
- Not convinced that this new structure will better accomplish needs of denomination
- Needs to be bolder; restructuring is a waste of time; should be re-visioning the Church
- This is still about protecting endowments; Conferences have zero interest in this issue.

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- How do we provide resources to our local churches? That's the question.

### **Group C:**

- Just do it.
- Go for it and hear people out
- Get on with it; it's not the silver bullet
- Keep it flexible
- The product will not last nor should it
- Let's not get so tied up in process that we can't be responsive. We can trust the national setting.

### **Group D:**

- Size: small is ????? as used here
- Details still missing
- Selection process
- Case study in racism/discernment and/or anti-racism discernment
- Is national church the church? What is our ecclesiology in the UCC?
- Will Conference select its own representatives?

### **Group E:**

- There's an inconsistency with core concepts and principles: Starts out with mission basis (God's mission is the focus, then we shift to old institutional model: institutional groups relating to institutional groups.
- Counter view: with mission as focus, governance factors = way to live out that mission (how do we organize ourselves in order to enhance mission?)
- If UCC wants to see itself as a movement, we want to organize ourselves in a manner that contributes to that movement
- In a "flattened" world, central governance is not an impediment.
- Many gave this their "Whole-hearted support; nothing that sets me off"
- How can we move mandates from "history" to "future" focus? (Last item on page 9 may be an issue giving fund with limited resources.)
- Still working with 2008 GSII document. Will dialogue process bring anything new to the table?
- Are there still deeply entrenched bodies that will try to block?

### **Group F:**

- I think we should do it and get it over with; the church has been paralyzed waiting for this to be over."
- "I've been waiting for this for 30 years.

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### **Group G:**

- Fully committed to the proclamation of a Gospel of extravagant welcome/radical hospitality.
- Not only political progressive, but culturally progressive. We weight in heavily in the former, less so by far in the latter. We have a message, but we don't know how to share it with those who need to, but haven't heard it.

### **Group H:**

- Unified is not same as moving "5 into to one". Re: Executive summary (paragraph 3). Thus Executive summary is incorrect.
- There are different understandings of what "unified" means. Agree to disagree over what single governance or unified means; that perhaps the spirit of General Synod resolution not being listened to.
- Observation that old document of 2008 is still operative post Synod.

### **Group I:**

- Document not clear. See original.

### **Question 2: What do you believe God is calling the UCC to be now and in the future?**

**Group A** No response

### **Group B:**

- Need to be moving in creative ways; not wasting our resources on restructuring

### **Group C:**

- Nimble as possible in rapidly changing world
- Progressive faith voice
- Less structure; clear commitments to UCC values

### **Group D:**

- UCC is a unique, positive, progressive, inclusive Christian community
- Unapologetic about it
- UCC national concern for life of our worshiping congregations, with support/support systems for local church
- Be the StillSpeaking vision

### **Group E:**

- Nimble and flexible

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- Strategically poised
- Centered in our mission
- Get over institutional paradigms in which we are stuck
- Be a responsive, missional movement that will create governance that enhances the movement

### **Group F:**

- We need to learn there are wonderful new ways provided by technology to be in touch and talk with each other
- We are called to use new models for ministry in this new day and age.\

**Group G:** No response

### **Group H:**

- Are we “starting over” trying to discern calling?
- Why not “try” a new model before committing to a new model?
- Caution not to confuse governance with ministry (i.e. ministry teams)

**Group I:** Not clear. See original

## **Section II: Comments from the General Discussion**

- Document is about where we’ve already been, rather than discernment about where we can/need to go.
- Proposal is essentially the original; nothing new except a process.
- What is critical in the conversation is that people don’t know enough about what is actually being proposed. We were encouraged to restate history, which brings us to this point, so the conversation cannot be that we don’t know what is going on.
- P 9 includes, but is not limited to, HUGS groups.
- Appears to be a lack of understanding of what governance means; i.e. not exerting authority, but overseeing workings of a body and getting a job done. More explicitness about meaning would be helpful.
- I am concerned about the reality of having a Conference Board of Directors find 1 ½ hours to comment by June 30<sup>th</sup>. This is virtually impossible for us. It is difficult to get that critical mass together.
- Some are saying, “Why is this coming back to us? We’ve already discussed and processed that. Let’s just do it!”
- Noted that General Synod DID take a position in its action. The issue is to have the new Governance Team move to the how.

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- This is a political process. Not everyone will agree, but decisions will and must be made.
- We are looking for exposure in this process. Not everyone will agree, but we want to get clear information out there, and receive responses as a decision making mode emerges.