

Summary Congregational Conversation
Governance Task Force
Oct. 23, 2016

In attendance: Sally Taylor, Bev Thierwechter, Kate Fraleigh, Jim Souder, Achsah Carrier, Karen Ransom, Laura Horn, Donna Redmond, Ann Salamini, Pam Philips, and Jamie McReynolds

Bev introduced the proposal. The question was raised about when this would be enacted. The plan is that the bylaws changes will be included in the agenda of the May Congregational meeting. Sally pointed out that there would be two possibilities: a vote on the bylaws changes in its entirety which means a single yes/no vote on the whole thing or votes on each change which would be a long and perhaps divisive process. All agreed that the former would be preferable.

The changes include a reduction in board positions from 12 to 7 positions eliminating President Elect, Past President and 3 at Large Board members. All board members would serve two year terms and terms would continue to be staggered. The present recommendation limits the president to one term. Pam objected to that limitation and a discussion ensued during which all agreed that that should be changed. The thought was that limiting the total consecutive service on the board to 6 years would be enough to ensure change in leadership even if the president served two years in another capacity and four years as president.

It was pointed out that the Governance Task Force is collecting feedback from the congregation and will make changes in the proposal (and the suggested bylaws changes) in response but that the board will also have an opportunity to make changes since they are the ones who will include the final product in the agenda of the congregational meeting. Changes will have to be made in the Policy Manual as well to implement the changes but that will be up to the board, or staff or another task force.

The proposal also include changes in the congregation elected and board appointed committees. The Leadership Development Committee will have increased recruiting responsibilities and will become the Nominating Committee and will not have leadership development responsibilities. This function, however, is critical and the board needs to determine which group, committee or staff member will assume this responsibility. Laura pointed out that the church is understaffed.

The role of the VP was questioned. Although under this plan the VP will have responsibility for the newly created Policy Group, this is not a change in responsibilities since the VP is in charge of that now.

It was pointed out that because of the reduced size of the board, the At Large Board members would have to have areas of responsibility—task forces, special projects of the board etc. Under this system no board member will only show up of board meetings.... Training before board service will be essential as will clear communication of the expectations of board service during the recruitment process by the Nominating Committee. Karen suggested considering a co-presidency option. This could be accommodated if the President and At Large Board member elected at

the same time agreed to this job sharing arrangement. Pam pointed out that because she had served as secretary for 2 years, she did not need the three year configuration of the presidency. All agreed that better training of all the board officers is needed.

Experience shows that electing the treasurer and secretary in the same year is not ideal and that the President and VP also need to be elected in different years. The group recommended that the President, Treasurer and At Large Board member be elected in even numbered years and that the VP, Secretary and two At Large Board Members be elected in odd numbered years. Perhaps the VP position should once again be divided into two VP positions....last time it was VP Programs and VP Administration.

Laura pointed out that under the present system the President acts as an ombudsman answering questions from congregants on everything from how does this get done, who is in charge of this etc. In other non-profits staff members have that role but we are understaffed. It was suggested that the COM might take on that responsibility but they would have to become much more visible than they are now. There is a need to reduce the pressure and responsibilities on both the President and Vice President.

It was pointed out that in some congregations the board is elected and then votes to choose its officers. The task force decided that this model would not work at TJMC and that recruiting for the board would be much more difficult under that scenario.

Laura and Karen pointed out that the board has unfilled positions and therefore is smaller and the result has been a more nimble board suggesting that this proposed model will work better. At present the board is expected to know everything and to be in charge of everything....

There are jobs that are inappropriate for volunteers. There is a need for the increased staffing called for by the Staffing Task Force but we do not have the financial resources to make that happen.

At present congregants expect a personal invitation to participate in anything.....this is not possible with a large congregation. There is a need for increased small group ministry (not covenant groups) to provide these personal invitations to participate—a systemic division of the congregation into small groups for communication purposes. It was suggested that increased and systematic use of Facebook might help....or perhaps not. The question of how to educate the congregation is critical. The size of our congregation requires a new approach. But it was agreed that the smaller board would be more nimble and function better.

Gratitude for the work of the task force was expressed by many.

Summary submitted by Sally Taylor.