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Nominating Committees: Making Them More Effective **A Guide to Offer to Your Church Nominating Committee**

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While the role of the Nominating Committee varies in Unitarian Universalist churches, it is one of the most important committees in the church. Its vision and effectiveness, or lack thereof, has significant and enduring organizational consequences. Typically, the Nominating Committee is responsible, per the bylaws, for nominating a slate for the Board of Trustees, both officers and at-large members. In some congregations the role is much larger and involves recruiting people for committee chairs and other key leadership positions.

Too often the role of the Nominating Committee (NC) is minimized or trivialized by the assumption that anyone can serve on the board or in other key leadership positions, and provide adequate leadership. That is not the case. Acting on such an assumption deprives our churches of the lay leadership they need to be vital, dynamic centers of liberal religion. Nominees to the board should have demonstrated leadership in the church and/or in other organizations. While some NCs use staggered, multiple year terms, many are elected or appointed for a single year. In either case the NC needs to develop a process and a timeline to accomplish its work. Following is a suggested process. While it may not apply to the needs and traditions of your specific church, you can use it to create your own process. (Suggested time to complete process is four to six months.)

1. Meet as a committee to get to know each other, sharing your experiences as Unitarian Universalists, your joys and concerns about your church, and your ideas about the role of the committee.
2. Agree upon a process to be used, the time-line required with key deadlines, and the role and responsibility of each committee member.
3. Meet with the board to learn the issues facing the board in the future and what skills, backgrounds, and interests they would welcome in new board members. Invite the board to recommend people for your consideration. Obtain from or develop with the board Job Descriptions for each board position. When anyone recommends a name they should also provide reasons as to why they believe this person would be an effective board member.

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4. Meet with key staff members including the Minister and Director of Religious Education to discuss the skills, backgrounds, and interests needed on the board. Discuss with them the Job Descriptions for each board position for their comment. Invite staff members to recommend people for your consideration.
5. Based upon input from the board and staff, meet to assess further the characteristics of the prospective board members offering the best fit with the needs of the board and the church and consisting of either a single list of characteristics or specific profiles for board positions. Give attention to balance and diversity in terms of gender, length of membership, constituencies represented, etc. Another consideration is the "chemistry" of the board affected by the prospective nominees.
6. Develop and discuss lists of potential nominees and rank them by choice.
7. Accumulate additional information about each prospective nominee, and assign prospective nominees to committee members to gather information on each one. Talk with members and staff who have worked with a prospective nominee to assess his/her skills, work-style, leadership qualities, etc. to confirm, modify, and/or increase your knowledge about each prospective nominee.
8. Meet and share the information gathered about prospective nominees. Based on this input, rank prospective nominees again.
9. Draft a strong, positive recruiting letter that communicates your interest in nominating a person for a particular position highlighting some of the future issues that the board will be addressing and stating the reasons that the NC wants to nominate this person. Conclude by indicating that a member of the committee will contact them to answer questions and to learn of their decision. Include the responsibilities and duties of the position and an estimate of the amount of time that will be required for the job.
10. Develop a strategy for the sequence of recruitment, focusing on the President and then Treasurer before pursuing subsequent nominees.
11. Send letters to prospective nominees based on the rankings and your overall recruitment strategy, follow-up with the telephone contacts, and update committee members of the responses. (If a person declines a nomination, ask them if they might accept a nomination in the future. While a "no" may mean a lack of interest, it may also indicate a short-term problem with timing.) If you are pursuing a single slate, recruiting letters should be sent sequentially to avoid getting multiple candidates for the same position. For contested slates, a number of letters can be sent out at the same time.
12. As prospective nominees accept a nomination, invite them to provide information about themselves to be shared with the congregation. Key questions to be asked include: What are your qualifications for serving on the Board? Why do you want to serve? What is your vision for the church? The response by each candidate should be widely publicized well in advance of the election. You may want to create a display at church with pictures of candidates along with their response.
13. Hold the election. Celebrate all the hard work that the committee has completed. Write a report for the next committee so they will have the benefit of your experience.