

3. Regional associations

The structure and activities of a regional association of twelve working groups attest to two broad motives: a strong desire to serve the Father and fellow human beings by promoting the progressive growth and development of all mankind, and a firm commitment to the revelation. In a spiritual sense, the work of a regional association resembles aspects of the active ministry that the Infinite Spirit, the Creative Mother Spirit, and the master seraphim provide to human beings as members of human society. In other words, the association's members and associates engage in mutual and joint efforts to help individuals and groups attune to and pursue the Father's plan for our planet's growth and development.

The ten substantive working groups direct their efforts outward, providing quiet, modest, and unassuming service to individuals and groups in society who wish to promote growth and development on our planet Urantia. These working groups seek to encourage, inspire, and help others on a purely voluntary basis, without any effort to dictate to them, direct them, or assert any form of express or implied authority over them.

In contrast, the work of the two managerial working groups relates to the internal operations of the regional association. Their administrative and inspirational tasks consist of Father-like and Son-like functions that support and channel the Spirit-like endeavors of the substantive working groups.

FUND RAISING is a responsibility of all twelve working groups. The substantive working groups should mainly raise funds from contacts whom they serve and from others in society who are attracted to their mission of promoting progressive growth. The managerial working groups should raise funds from readers of *The Urantia Book*, on the understanding that they may also accept contributions from others.

ACTIVE COOPERATION ACROSS REGIONS. Each working group will benefit very substantially by exchanging ideas and experience with counterparts in other regions. In the long run these cooperative connections will yield invaluable inspiration and insight, resources far more closely attuned to the practical needs of any given working group than any set of abstract principles or general advice could be. The working groups should use their own initiative to create and maintain these horizontal connections, while honoring the policy and management guidelines that govern the work of each association.

Printed material and information available on working group websites will often be useful and inspiring. Given appropriate circumstances and sufficient resources, working groups that perform the same or similar tasks in different regions should also be encouraged to inspire each other through visits, personnel exchanges, and occasional gatherings that are aimed at exploring specific topics of mutual interest.

a. The managerial working groups

In a symbolic and spiritual sense, working groups 1 and 12 carry out a practical partnership with each substantive working group, in order to coordinate, administer, and support its Spirit-like efforts.

In addition, working groups 1 and 12 carry out Father-like and Son-like functions in relation to the regional association as a whole. This includes the right and responsibility to provide binding advice and guidance on any disagreement that may arise among the substantive working groups.

The managerial working groups monitor overall performance and seek to enhance it, attempting to ensure that each substantive working group provides service and assistance to others in effective and efficient ways that harmonize with the revelators' goals and ideals. These responsibilities relate to the practical methods and the psychological and spiritual approaches that a substantive working group is using as it serves and assists individuals and groups operating in society at large. On the other hand, the managerial working groups are not responsible for appraising the initiatives or reforms that individuals and groups are pursuing in society. They are not entitled to instruct a substantive working group on the advice it should give, nor on its strategies for promoting progressive growth and development.

As a general matter, working groups 1 and 12 will respect the decisions of each substantive working group in regard to its own priorities and the degrees of emphasis, attention, and energy it wishes to assign to different activities and programs — provided that such decisions respect policy and management guidelines that pertain to the regional association as a whole.

JOINT AND COOPERATIVE FUNCTIONS

— *Establishing a substantive working group and supervising its work during the trial period:* During the extended process of establishing the ten substantive working groups one by one and supervising their activities during the trial period, working groups 1 and 12 operate jointly and on the basis of complete equality. Each decision regarding such matters requires the joint approval of working groups 1 and 12. (For a description of the trial period and the special procedures it requires, see section b in Chapter 6.)

— *Adopting and promulgating fundamental policies that guide or direct the operations of the entire regional association of twelve working groups:* (a) working group 1 proposes; (b) working group 12 reviews and comments; (c) working group 1 enacts and issues by majority vote of all its members.

— *Issuing other guidelines and rules that govern the conduct of members and associates as they serve and assist individuals and groups (e.g., in relation to spiritual goals, ethical considerations, and personal relationships):* (a) working group 12 proposes; (b) working group 1 reviews and comments; (c) working group 12 enacts and issues by majority vote of all its members.

— *Budgetary & financial matters that affect a regional association as a whole:* (a) working group 1 formulates; (b) working group 12 approves. If a serious disagreement arises over the budget, and if these differences cannot be resolved by good-faith efforts to conciliate all sides and work out a compromise:

- (1) The previous year's budget shall take effect temporarily, after making an appropriate mechanical adjustment (*i.e.*, all allotments reduced or increased by a specific percentage, or perhaps left unchanged); and
- (2) At the same time, the budgetary disagreement shall be referred to the Coordinating Commission for its binding decision. The Consultative Forum shall have the right to offer comments and suggestions, but does not have a formal role in resolving the question.

If an equally intractable dispute were to arise over other financial matters, current practices shall remain in effect while that disagreement is likewise referred to the Coordinating Commission.

— *Disciplinary or advisory proceedings:* Either of the managerial working groups may propose disciplinary proceedings affecting any member or associate of the regional association. In addition, either of them may propose formal proceedings of inquiry, advice, and guidance, in order to examine specific activities of a working group or its overall pattern of operations.

- (a) The process shall go forward if and only if working group 1 decides to appoint one or more members or associates who are responsible for presenting and explaining the concerns or charges (in effect, acting as advocates or prosecutors).
- (b) In that event, working group 12 shall designate three or more members who will sit as an ad hoc tribunal and render judgment on the case, provided that none of them has a direct personal relationship with the facts or circumstances to be examined.
- (c) The parties to a dispute or disciplinary proceeding shall have the right to be notified and to be present, either in person or through the participation of someone who represents them.
- (d) Working group 1 shall enforce the tribunal's decision, except that:
 - A judgment involving the removal of any officer of a working group must be confirmed or disallowed by the Consultative Forum, pending which that officer shall be suspended and shall not exercise his or her functions. At its discretion, the Consultative Forum may wish to develop an alternate approach to resolving the case.

- A judgment involving the expulsion of any member or associate of a working group must likewise be confirmed or disallowed by the Consultative Forum, pending which that member or associate shall be suspended and shall not be permitted to participate in working group activities. At its discretion, the Consultative Forum may wish to develop an alternate approach to resolving the case.

WORKING GROUP 1

Working group 1 coordinates and administers the regional association, thereby carrying out Father-like functions. In many of its activities that relate to the operations of a substantive working group, it offers advisory recommendations and suggestions. This reflects the fact that each substantive working group has substantial management authority of its own, including the right to decide what degrees of emphasis, attention, and energy it wishes to allot to different activities and programs.

Working group 1 exerts financial and managerial oversight, seeking to ensure that the activities and programs of the substantive working groups are both effective and efficient. These tasks include responsibility for auditing working group operations, maintaining fiscal accountability, and supervising all forms of fund raising. In regard to financial questions on which a substantive working group is entitled to make its own decisions, working group 1 may wish to offer advisory recommendations and suggestions.

Working group 1 formulates managerial principles that apply to the regional association as a whole. It inspects each other working group on a regular schedule and, at its own initiative, on an ad hoc basis keyed to specific questions or concerns. It exercises responsibility for organizational, fiscal, and legal matters on behalf of the association, except in regard to any such function that it may have delegated to one or more of the other working groups.

Working group 1 reports to the Coordinating Commission, in part by submitting a detailed budgetary report on an annual basis. When working group 1 does this, it shall circulate a copy of that report to the treasurer of each other working group in the regional association.

— *Admission of members and associates:* Working group 1 shall evaluate a candidate's values, ethics, and ability to cooperate, in part as a result of a personal interview. In most cases it will wish to request personal references, but it may use its discretion when considering a candidate who is already well known to members or associates.

— *Personal background:* Members and associates of working group 1 would benefit from experience in general management, project management and efficiency analysis, accounting and finance, fund raising, economics, information technology, editing and publishing, public relations, law, and human resources. These possible backgrounds are advisory suggestions, not definite requirements. On the other hand, all members and associates should be mature individuals who are tactful, wise, and skilled in interpersonal relations.

— *Relationship to the revelation:* A member of working group 1 shall be a dedicated reader of *The Urantia Book* who pledges to pursue the plan for progressive growth and development that it portrays, while expressing an enduring commitment to its spiritual principles. A person who desires to become an associate may prefer to make the same pledge. If not, such a candidate shall state that he or she understands and accepts the fact that the working group will use *The Urantia Book* as the primary source of spiritual inspiration for its activities and goals.

— *Motives:* Members and associates of working group 1 shall desire to help manage and facilitate the work of the regional association as a whole, on the understanding that the mission of the substantive working groups is to serve and assist fellow human beings regardless of their religious views and philosophic convictions.

— *Participation:* A member of working group 1 shall identify with the effort and shall devote substantial time and energy to it. An associate shall be someone who desires to volunteer his or her services and who is willing to perform recurring functions or specific tasks. The working group shall have discretionary authority to interpret and adapt these requirements, on the understanding that all such adjustments shall make a positive contribution to its role and mission.

If an individual's participation does not conform to the general guidelines that the working group has adopted, it may grant an exception for a period not to exceed one year. Any such proposal, however, shall be approved if and only if it receives the support of a majority of the working group members who vote on the question.

— *Election of officers:* In electing its officers, working group 1 shall employ the methods and approaches that are described in Chapter 6.

— *Delegation of responsibility:* The chairman of working group 1 shall operate in close cooperation with the vice-chairman, in part by deciding to assign specific tasks to individual members and associates. If and only if the vice-chairman agrees, the chairman may appoint a coordinator who will be responsible for performing certain functions on an ongoing basis and/or for supervising the efforts of others.

— *Rotational methods:* Working group 1 may wish to prepare a specific plan for rotating some or all of its coordinators and officers. After preparing such a plan, working group 1 shall submit it to the Coordinating Commission, which may approve it, insist on certain changes, or decline to approve and state its reasons. If the Commission were to approve, the plan shall enter into effect in accordance with its provisions and any transitional measures that the Commission might specify.

WORKING GROUP 12

Working group 12 provides internal advice and counsel, while also conducting periodic counseling visits to review and appraise the work of each other working group. It does this on a regular schedule and, at its own initiative, on an ad hoc basis keyed to specific questions or concerns. In addition, the members and associates of working group 12 are reserves who can be assigned to temporary service in any of the other working groups.

Working group 12 monitors and evaluates ongoing activities of the entire regional association from spiritual, philosophic, moral, ethical, and psychological perspectives. In part, the members and associates of working group 12 address the “insiderness” of the effort, including psychological and spiritual aspects that affect other participants. They are also “morale officers” who make themselves available to counsel others on a personal level and minister to their spiritual needs. Thus working group 12 carries out Son-like functions.

In monitoring and evaluating the work of the regional association, the members and associates of working group 12 consider a broad range of issues and concerns, including the factors identified in the following questions:

- (1) Is the endeavor proceeding in a kind, thoughtful, tolerant, generous, respectful, and loving spirit that bespeaks the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and that also honors other key ideals of the revelation? Is the enterprise spiritually fragrant, so that other human beings can be attracted, inspired, and encouraged to work together for common purposes?
- (2) Are working group members and associates providing types of service and assistance to individuals and groups that reflect the interests and needs of those they serve?
- (3) In doing this, are members and associates demonstrating unselfish devotion to the essential goal, fostering and encouraging the growth and development of all mankind? Are they acting in broadminded and altruistic ways that are not tainted with any apparent desire to dominate others or exert authority over them?
- (4) Does a general tone of respect, friendliness, and warmth pervade the personal relationships of members and associates with the individuals and groups whom they serve and assist?
- (5) Are members and associates maintaining a reputation for benevolent, disinterested, and evenhanded counsel, in part by refraining from becoming so strongly identified with particular campaigns or social causes that they lose credibility for other purposes?
- (6) Are working group officers and coordinators administering the effort in ways that contribute to teamwork, cooperation, and mutual respect? Are they doing their best to make appropriate use of individual skills and abilities, while simultaneously seeking to foster the personal growth of members and associates?

- (7) Do members and associates find the endeavor spiritually satisfying and fulfilling? Should the working group adopt improved individual or group methods that would enhance personal growth or increase overall dedication and devotion?
- (8) Are members and associates making information about the revelation available in understated and tactful ways? Are they considerate and respectful of the views of others as they answer questions about the revelation and nurture potential interest, while avoiding any temptation to “evangelize” or make distinctions among those they serve based on conviction or belief?

Working group 12 reports to the Consultative Forum, in part by submitting an annual appraisal that evaluates the work of the regional association and describes recent trends. When working group 12 submits this appraisal, it shall circulate a copy to the chairman of each other working group.

— *Admission of members and associates:* Working group 12 shall evaluate a candidate’s values, ethics, and ability to cooperate, in part as a result of a personal interview. In most cases it will wish to request personal references, but it may use its discretion when considering a candidate who is already well known to members or associates.

— *Personal background:* Members and associates of working group 12 would benefit from experience in philosophy, theology, political science and public service, history, sociology, medicine, psychology, counseling, and human resources. These possible backgrounds are advisory suggestions, not definite requirements. On the other hand, all members and associates should be mature individuals who are tactful, wise, and skilled in interpersonal relations.

— *Relationship to the revelation:* A member of working group 12 shall be a dedicated reader of *The Urantia Book* who pledges to pursue the plan for progressive growth and development that it portrays, while expressing an enduring commitment to its spiritual principles. A person who desires to become an associate may prefer to make the same pledge. If not, such a candidate shall state that he or she understands and accepts the fact that the working group will use *The Urantia Book* as the primary source of spiritual inspiration for its activities and goals.

— *Motives:* Members and associates of working group 12 shall desire to help stimulate and encourage the work of the regional association as a whole, on the understanding that the mission of the substantive working groups is to serve and assist fellow human beings regardless of their religious views and philosophic convictions.

— *Participation:* A member of working group 12 shall identify with the effort and shall devote substantial time and energy to it. An associate shall be someone who desires to volunteer his or her services and who is willing to perform recurring functions or specific tasks. The working group shall have discretionary authority to interpret and adapt these requirements, on the understanding that all such adjustments shall make a positive contribution to its role and mission.

If an individual's participation does not conform to the general guidelines that the working group has adopted, it may grant an exception for a period not to exceed one year. Any such proposal, however, shall be approved if and only if it receives the support of a majority of the working group members who vote on the question.

— *Election of officers:* In electing its officers, working group 12 shall employ the methods and approaches that are described in Chapter 6.

— *Delegation of responsibility:* The chairman of working group 12 shall operate in close cooperation with the vice-chairman, in part by deciding to assign specific tasks to individual members and associates. If and only if the vice-chairman agrees, the chairman may appoint a coordinator who will be responsible for performing certain functions on an ongoing basis and/or for supervising the efforts of others.

— *Rotational methods:* Working group 12 may wish to prepare a specific plan for rotating some or all of its coordinators and officers. After preparing such a plan, working group 12 shall submit it to the Consultative Forum, which may approve it, insist on certain changes, or decline to approve and state its reasons. If the Forum were to approve, the plan shall enter into effect in accordance with its provisions and any transitional measures that the Forum might specify.

b. The substantive working groups

In a symbolic and spiritual sense, working groups 1 and 12 carry out a practical partnership with each substantive working group, in order to coordinate, administer, and support its Spirit-like efforts.

The ten substantive working groups have the following names:

WORKING GROUP 2

Working group on personal growth and development

WORKING GROUP 3

Working group on philosophy and religion

WORKING GROUP 4

Working group on civic life, public service, and global cooperation

WORKING GROUP 5

Working group on social harmony

WORKING GROUP 6

Working group on science

WORKING GROUP 7

Working group on education

WORKING GROUP 8

Working group on health

WORKING GROUP 9

Working group on the home and the family

WORKING GROUP 10

Working group on industry, agriculture, and commerce

WORKING GROUP 11

Working group on literature, the arts, and entertainment

For an explanation of their respective responsibilities, see Chapter 4.

As a general matter, the ten substantive working groups have considerable management authority over their own internal affairs. A substantive working group must respect policy and management guidelines that pertain to the regional association as a whole, but within these broad limits it may determine its own priorities and decide on the degrees of emphasis, attention, and energy that it wishes to assign to different activities and programs. In addition a substantive working group is the sole judge of the advice and counsel that its members and associates provide to individuals and groups in society at their request, on the understanding that all participants must respect the regional association's policy principles and advisory guidelines on spiritual, philosophic, moral, ethical, and psychological aspects.

Each substantive working group organizes its work under the following broad headings:

- a. Information activities
- b. Networking and problem solving
- c. Private dialogue
- d. Meetings and forums
- e. Publications

In addition, each working group uses understated and tactful methods to nurture potential interest in the revelation. That will be an indirect benefit, the outcome of personal cooperation and natural curiosity. For a detailed description of working group activities, see Chapter 5.

— *Reports:* Each substantive working group submits periodic reports to the managerial working groups, as discussed in Chapter 6.

— *Admission of members and associates:* Each substantive working group shall evaluate a candidate's values, ethics, and ability to cooperate, in part as a result of a personal interview. In most cases it will wish to request personal references, but it may use its discretion when considering a candidate who is already well known to members or associates.

— *Personal background:* All members and associates of a substantive working group should be mature individuals who are tactful, wise, and skilled in interpersonal relations. In addition:

- A member of a substantive working group shall have significant experience or professional credentials in one or more fields that a working group covers. This shall be understood to mean some combination of higher education, professional training, or work experience that totals at least five years. Each working group shall have discretionary authority to determine whether or not an individual's background is closely enough associated with the working group's responsibilities.
- An associate of a substantive working group may have a similar background. If not, a person who desires to become an associate shall have a strong interest in one or more fields that the working group covers. The working group shall use its own judgment in deciding whether or not a candidate fulfills this requirement.

— *Relationship to the revelation:* A member of a substantive working group shall be a dedicated reader of *The Urantia Book* who pledges to pursue the plan for progressive growth and development that it portrays, while expressing an enduring commitment to its spiritual principles. A person who desires to become an associate may prefer to make the same pledge. If not, such a candidate shall state that he or she understands and accepts the fact that the working group will use *The Urantia Book* as the primary source of spiritual inspiration for its activities and goals.

— *Motives:* Members and associates of the substantive working groups shall desire to serve and assist fellow human beings regardless of their religious views and philosophic convictions.

— *Participation:* A member of a substantive working group shall identify with the effort and shall devote substantial time and energy to it. An associate shall be someone who desires to volunteer his or her services and who is willing to perform recurring functions or specific tasks. Each working group shall have discretionary authority to interpret and adapt these requirements, on the understanding that all such adjustments shall make a positive contribution to its role and mission.

If an individual's participation does not conform to the general guidelines that a working group has adopted, it may grant an exception for a period not to exceed one year. Any such proposal, however, shall be approved if and only if it receives the support of a majority of the working group members who vote on the question.

— *Election of officers:* In electing its officers, a substantive working group shall employ the methods and approaches that are described in Chapter 6.

c. Review of working group responsibilities

At ten-year intervals, a regional association shall review working group responsibilities and shall consider whether or not it may be appropriate to make adjustments. In part, this review may enable the association to develop improved methods for serving individuals and groups who are active in new fields that may relate to the responsibilities of more than one working group. As a regional association considers broader adjustments and their possible merits, it should take appropriate account of two competing factors:

- A significant realignment could produce greater clarity and efficiency that would enable the regional association to be more responsive and more helpful to individuals and groups whom it serves.
- On the other hand a sweeping realignment would probably be disruptive at first, for it would tend to cause a certain amount of confusion and friction among the working groups and their contacts in society.

A regional association shall carry out its review of working group responsibilities based on procedures and policy guidelines that working group 1 develops and issues. If the association concludes that it should readjust or realign working group responsibilities, it shall prepare a specific plan and shall submit it to the Coordinating Commission. The Commission may approve the plan, insist on certain changes, or decline to approve and state its reasons. If the Commission were to approve, the plan shall enter into effect in accordance with its provisions and any transitional measures that the Commission might specify.