

CONGREGATIONS COME FIRST WORKSHOP
Large Congregation Conference
3/15/2008

These are the responses to the questions asked during the workshop:

#1 *How has your congregation changed in the past 10 years to reflect changes in the larger society?*

- Greater awareness of larger society, more outward-looking, such as issues related to global warming.
- Governance structure and accountability (more transparent)
- Seeing more previously “unchurched” newcomers than those coming out of other traditions.
- Diversity training
- Use of technology in worship

#2 *If growth of congregations of every size in every location was a priority, how would our Association be structured?*

- To be able to answer questions of relevance of the UUA to the local congregations, such as, *Who or what is the UUA? What does it matter to our congregation?*
- Choices and opportunities for specialized services based on congregations’ needs—*Who would be the best or most skilled consultant to bring into this congregation to meet its needs?*
- There is a disconnect between goals of the UUA (such as the ad campaign) and the goals of location congregations.
- Some congregations get more services from their districts than other districts. They may or may not need or want what is available.
- Some congregations have spun off smaller congregations—*What level of support does that require for all to flourish?*
- Social networking and distributed networks based on interests, needs or size (such as blogs, email groups, My space-type sites, etc)
- “Church in Second Life.”
- Full service congregations vs smaller self-led congregations—*What are the differences and how can resources be developed and designed to meet those unique needs?*
- Find ways to maximize impact of summer services in smaller communities, such as to planning to hold joint services in one of the locations.

#3 *What is the leadership role for large congregations in strengthening the connections among congregations?*

- If you have a large enough facility, open it up! Share it! Use it!
- Bed and Breakfast programs for connecting UUs—hosting individuals or groups.
- Sharing more resources online—clearinghouses, by-laws, websites
- UUA website presence

- Satellite growth strategies
- Taking more initiative in making connections with UU neighbors
- Rich variety of resources many large congregations have—look for opportunities to share.
- Chalice Lighter programs for funding
- Mixed results with clusters—they work better with a focus on doing something meaningful for the wider community.

#4 *What questions would you like the CCF team to consider?*

- *Can it be more clearly conveyed that congregational growth requires healthy?*
- *Are there funding sources to support ministerial formation (like there are in other denominations)?*
- *What if each of our members could think of at least one other person our congregation could involve or serve? Are we called to serve twice as many people?*
- *Are we asking the right questions of ourselves to avoid constantly reinventing the wheel?*
- *What is the best use of resources, particularly for small or declining congregations?*
- *Is there a way for ministers to start UU Congregations (clergy initiated church planting)?*
- *How might we identify what works in the UUA or elsewhere that we can use?*
- *How can we best get innovative ideas to inspire congregations?*