

Report to the Board of Trustees
Congregational Services
March 2007

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This is an extraordinary time in the ministries of the staff in Congregational Services. Each and every one of us is at a place where experience, commitment, need and possibility have come together in service to the growth of Unitarian Universalism in some most important - and even transformative - ways. Many of the items mentioned in this report are groundbreaking for us - in that they represent the first time we've undertaken such an effort and/or reflect a significant new direction.

It is a blessed pleasure to report to you at this time; and in doing so to give thanks to and for my Congregational Services colleagues - staff, consultants, trainers.

UU Summer of Spirituality and Service

With thanks for the generosity and vision a donor, the Young Adult and Campus Ministry Office is creating an extraordinary opportunity for UU young adults - a Summer of Services and Spirituality. With Lissa Gundlach, a seminary student at Union Theological Seminary and former UUA Washington Office staff member, as the Summer Director for the program and Julianna Lovell, part-time Program Associate working out of the Ballou-Channing District, relationships are being built with agencies around Boston and Providence where participating interns will serve. Interns will be housed together in university housing in either Boston or Providence. They will meet at local UU churches for their two days each week of group time, and, in return, will coordinate a Sunday service at each congregation in mid-July (towards the end of the program). Michael Tino, Director for Young Adult and Campus Ministry is leading development of a curriculum for the program, which will be grounded in leadership development, small group ministry, personal reflection and UU history and theology. We are using a mixture of newly-developed curriculum pieces and existing curricula (such as the Goldmine Youth and Young Adult Leadership Conference curriculum). Pre- and post-summer retreats for the participants will be held to build community and debrief from the experience, respectively. We are hoping to interview participants on video so that we can better develop outreach materials for future UUSOSS programs. We had over 30 excellent applicants for the 14 spots in the program. The 14 participants selected are an amazingly diverse group of young people, spanning the entire age range of 18 to 25 and representing congregations in some 12 UUA districts. We have mailed letters to all applicants, including several wonderful people who are, for now, on a waitlist.

Spiritually Vital and Alive: a conference on contemporary worship

The Office of Young Adult and Campus Ministry sponsored the 1st UUA Conference on Contemporary Worship, entitled "Spiritually Vital and Alive." It was held from Feb 22-24 at the First UU Church of San Diego, CA. The conference's purpose was to help UU congregations imagine new and interesting ways of worship. It was attended by 140 people (registration was capped due to space constraints), who represented a wide variety of constituencies--including ministers, religious educators, music professionals, young adult professionals, seminarians and lay leaders of all ages. Attendees came from 67 congregations in 27 states and 3 Canadian provinces (including 17 of the 20 UUA districts and 3 of the 4 CUC Regions). Highlights of the conference included a spectacular keynote presentation by Dr. Marcia McFee as well as 11 worship opportunities--two morning moving meditation sessions, five concurrent smaller worship services, and four exciting, all-conference worship services. The fifteen workshops were arranged in five tracks: theology, intergenerational worship, music, anti-oppression and practical issues. Participants left asking when the next such conference would be. Many thanks go to our hosts in San Diego and in the Pacific Southwest District for their hospitality. A DVD resource using conference video is in development.

Now Is the Time: Leading Congregations into a Multiracial, Multicultural Future

Congregational Services sponsored the first national conference on multicultural competencies for congregational leaders, entitled Now Is the Time: Leading Congregations into a Multiracial, Multicultural Future. The purpose was to help leaders understand and explore how to lead our congregations into this kind of future, and to experience what such a future might look like, sound like and how this vision challenges us to change. The conference was held from February 16-18, 2007 in Arlington, VA. The conference coincided with annual gathering of the Asian Pacific Islander caucus of DRUUMM. A number of APIC Caucus members participated in the conference on Friday. In total there were 146 participants representing 58 congregations from 23 states and the District of Columbia. Highlights of the conference included the opening worship service led by the Revs. Bill Sinkford and Jason Shelton; a challenging and inspiring day long keynote presentation with the Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Lewis, Senior Minister of Vision, Worship and the Arts at Middle Collegiate Church in New York City and former lead consultant for the Cultural Boundaries Project of the Alban Institute; a half day keynote previewing the soon to be field tested curriculum "Building The World We Dream About" by Dr. Mark Hicks, four workshops that explored other aspects of leadership and resources supporting leaders in this work. The conference closed with the participants joining in worship at All Souls Church in Washington, DC. This

worship also was the close for the APIC Caucus gathering. After the many opportunities to think about, talk about, imagine and glimpse what multiracial, multicultural congregational life can be, this worship service was the real thing.

These three comments reflect some of the gifts of our time together:

Jacqui is passionate about developing leadership in multicultural/multiracial churches. She says. "Of 300,000 Christian congregations in this country, only six percent are multiracial, that is with 20 percent of another race other than the majority. We have much work to do around this issue. . . . and capacities to be built. We don't need communities of people pretending to be all the same, but rather communities in which the unique particularity of each person is recognized, accepted and affirmed. In the midst of that, it is important to risk showing our authentic selves and embracing the conflict that we might encounter, even while we commit to stay in relationship."

In introducing his workshop, Mark wrote, "As is well-documented, building a multi-racial/multi-cultural spiritual community is extraordinarily complicated work, but it can be done. The curriculum gently and intentionally builds a community of learners who carve out time to explore their own racial/ethnic histories, inter/intra-group dynamics, the role of power and privilege in congregational life, and, most important, how to respond to what is learned through these discussions with an anti-racist/anti-oppression lens. The morning workshop will provide a brief overview of the curriculum as well as a first-hand experience of the curriculum itself, which is set for field testing later in 2007."

One participant wrote: "Last Sunday's worship service at All Souls was the most spiritual experience I have ever had in any church in my 35 years of life (and I've "done" a lot of church) . . . my heart is still so very full. . . . I was a visitor. . . , part of the corps from the "Now is the Time" conference. From the tolling of the church bells to the last folk song, your church and that service was an affirmation that multicultural worship can happen, can be intentional and doesn't have to feel forced. It doesn't have to be some poorly-cobbled-together experience that ends up feeling like an empty, P.C. exercise guided by well-meaning but clueless white folk (like me). It can reflect the absolute best part of our universalist selves. We can be plural -- but still be together."

One final comment reflecting on both conferences: there were a number of people who attended both the Now Is The Time and Contemporary Worship conferences and made a point of noting that they were the two best UU conferences they'd ever been to--and back to back, to boot.

A DVD resource using conference video is in development. We are beginning the planning that will allow us to offer a similar conference experience in 2008 and 2009.

Congregational Stewardship: Beyond Fundraising, Forward Through the Ages

Beyond Fundraising: A Complete Guide to Congregational Stewardship, written by Wayne Clark, Director for Congregational Fundraising Services, is about to be hot off the press! The book is a coming of age story, moving us from a culture of scarcity to a culture that welcomes, and even expects, a focus on abundance. *Beyond Fundraising* contends that a new and comprehensive stewardship development program, *Forward Through the Ages*, puts money in perspective by making it one of five components of stewardship. Money becomes just one stewardship tool to help accomplish the ministry of our faith communities, rather than a topic to avoid and a barrier to fulfilling congregational ministry.

With the publication of this resource, Wayne is also launching a demonstration project that will involve 6 congregations and 6 Congregational Fundraising Consultants. These congregations will have the opportunity to be among the leaders in this culture change.

Marketing Outreach: next steps

The UUA has retained an advertising agency, Swardlick Marketing Group headquartered in Portland, Maine, to work with a UUA team convened by Valerie Holton, Marketing Outreach Director, to develop a strategic marketing plan. This plan will drive our third generation marketing outreach campaign; its goals and objectives, creative platform development and media buy. Concurrently, we will be updating our congregational welcoming and hospitality resources with some new materials and more user friendly web pages highlighting UUA marketing and outreach resources.

Among the new resources are:

Congregations Count, a growth and membership diagnostic tool to be used in conjunction with the *Membership Journey* resource to help congregations determine where they should focus their efforts in the membership process. This resource is being developed by Linda Laskowski, lay leader at UU Church of Berkley and will be available on line after *General Assembly*.

A multi-use DVD about "What is Unitarian Universalism?" intended for sharing our faith message with the curious, church visitors, new members, etc., and available in the fall.

Turn-key direct mail system - The UUA has implemented a program with a direct mail company, Modern Postcard, to provide congregations with a turnkey system for the design, print, list, and mail services for postcard direct mail. Information is available on uua.org

Upcoming marketing campaigns include San Francisco Bay marketing campaign. (Stewardship & Development is in the final months of campaign fund raising. The campaign goal is \$265,000. The District is designing and delivering Hospitality Workshops four times in March- April. The media buy will be completed this summer for an early October launch. Seventeen congregations are participating) and Portland/GA Marketing (now in the final stages of the media planning and expecting to start the media buy in April.)

Philadelphia/Wilmington Regional Growth Strategy:

The Rev. Ken Beldon, lead minister of the WellSprings congregation, will be meeting with the Growth Working Group of the Board and staying for lunch conversation with the full Board at your April meeting.

Tom Chulak, Congregational Services Growth Consultant, will conclude a three year consultancy with the 5 congregations (including WellSprings) in Northern Chester County in May. A report on the consultancy will be completed by mid-summer.

Four District Partnership with Congregational Services:

The Joseph Priestley, Metro New York, Ohio Meadville, and Saint Lawrence Districts have entered a collaborative partnership with the staff of Congregational Services focusing on growth and for the purposes of:

- 1) Creating a framework for a paradigm shift from maintenance toward transformation within the four districts.
- 2) Establishing the four districts as a regional group for common work and support.
- 3) Creating a regional team made up of the current co-employed UUA/District Staff with one member of the team serving as coordinator.
- 4) Expanding the headquarters/district staff partnership to address underserved areas of congregational ministries on a regional basis.

We have identified the broad areas of ministry that we will focus on in building this partnership. The strategic planning will begin later this spring with the first areas of focus likely to be young adult and campus ministry; large congregations; and multicultural competencies/anti racism. Tom Chulak will continue as quarter time growth consultant with Congregational Services in the role of regional team coordinator.

Policy based governance and emotional systems

Stefan Jonasson, Director for Large Congregations, finds that his consulting work is often focused on various aspects of governance. As he has worked with our largest congregations in their implementation and adaptation of policy based governance, he has found that issues/questions are seldom solely about governance. The emotional system is significant in to determining whether the functioning of governance processes are healthy/functional or not. He is doing what I believe to be groundbreaking work at the intersection of governance and emotional systems.

On line safe congregations training

We often hear about the various ways that on line environment is used for harm by predators and others. The UUA, in partnership with the Liberal Religious Educators Association, the New England Adolescent Research Institute and the Connecticut Distanced Learning Center is preparing to launch an online training based on Balancing Acts, an on line safe congregations resource developed for the UUA by the Rev. Debra Haffner. The purpose of this resource is to provide basic safe congregations training and resources to congregational leaders, both lay and professional including policies and procedures, guidance on educating the congregation, development of a safe congregation team, and a process for considering whether and if so how a congregation may include a person who is a sex offender. The test of the training is expected to take place in late April with a public launch soon thereafter. As far as we know this is a first: using the web for this kind of line training.

JUUST Change Consultancy - assessment underway

The purpose of the JUUST Change Anti-Oppression Consultancy is to help congregations increase their effectiveness in anti-oppression and social justice work. The consultancy aims to meet congregations where they are and help them in a developmental process to build leadership, strengthen capacity, and apply anti-oppression knowledge and principles to both transform congregations and the communities of which they are a part.

The first group of JUUST Change Consultants (JCC) was selected at the end of 2004, and JCC consultancies began the summer of 2005. A few pilots were underway while the consultancy was being designed. Consultants were selected for skills which would enable them to meet congregations where they are and help them with a developmental process of congregation based anti-racist, anti-oppressive multicultural transformation and social action. Consultants are expected to help identify internal leaders and facilitate group processes in developing vision and mission, dialogue, problem-solving, team development, and goal-setting. Consultants possess Pastoral Skills and Experience, Anti-Oppression Knowledge and Experience, Organizational Development Skills and Experience, and Multicultural Competencies. Including the pilot phase JUUST Change has providing consulting to 58 UU institutions and leadership groups.

Paula Cole Jones, lead consultant for JUUST Change, is in the midst of an assessment process of the first 18 months of this consultancy. The three components to the assessment are: interviews of selected congregations and other UU groups that have used the consultancy; conversation with the consultants, and dialogue between Paula and myself. Among the learnings that are emerging are:

1. To value these three C's conversation, collaboration and contextualization. All of the work begins and depends on having conversations about what can happen. Through conversations the needs emerge. JUUST Change Consultants contextualize our antiracism and multiculturalism commitment to specific groups. Contextualization is integral to every step. If consultants contextualize from the first conversation to the last one, the final conversation will be a new beginning for the group.
2. This is developmental work. It takes time. If we want this work to succeed then we must look to those places and people who can help us learn what it means to move forward. We must be willing to learn to use new tools, and practice new ways of thinking, being and doing. We must continue to seed the work... we are harvesting from seeds that have been planted over the past decade. This new phase of seeding will yield results over the next years. We must stay with the work. The thing that you thought was the right thing at that one point may have turned out not to be. The fact that it didn't work may mean you need to try something else, and not that the enterprise is bankrupt. JCC makes it more likely that the steps that are chosen will be a better fit for where people are now and helps people build skills and capacities that prepare them for more challenging work. It is about the long-term development of capacity.
3. Retooling is a critical step in transformation. Congregations and groups must have new concepts, frameworks, and skills before restructuring and

transformation are possible. Retooling may be necessary in order for groups to revision their space and their relationships with the wider community.

4. Assessment tools are incredibly valuable in this work and Paula has taken the lead on developing two for the use of JUUST Change:
 - a.) a multicultural competencies inventory for individual leaders and groups
 - b.) change process inventory based on Welcoming Resistance by Chris Hobgood

Planning for Growth Pilot Project

With the recently revised Planning for Growth Workshop for small and for small mid sized congregations as the anchor, we are about to launch a pilot project. The purpose of the project is to work in partnership with district staff colleagues to create and nurture congregational teams that are educated and passionate about leading their congregations to the appropriate next steps in growing.

We anticipate that each participating district (currently planned to be 3-6) will appoint a district mentor for the pilot congregations. An experienced Planning for Growth consultant will partner with each district mentor to foster growth in the participant congregations, by

- Partnering to establish criteria for selection of congregations and congregational teams
- Co-leading the workshops
- Partnering in follow up action and support to congregational teams
- Work with the District Staff

We are working toward the goal that congregations participating in Planning for Growth becoming part of the 30% necessary that will tip the culture change toward the growth of the UUism as a whole.

The pilot project is envisioned as a three year process that will look something like:
6 months of ground work for pilot launch with mentor and selected congregations
4 - 6 months congregational preparation leading to into the P4G workshop Workshop opportunities, tailored consulting and follow up over 18-24 months including support for congregational teams and support for development of district based resources.