

Effective Congregational Committees



**New Congregation and Growth Resources
Congregational Services
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of Congregations
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Important note for searching UUA.org: All UUA resources mentioned are available in the Leaders section of the web site, in the Leaders’ Library. Please use quotes around the title when you search to bring up the resource or item you seek.

The Work of Committees

This document is primarily concerned with ongoing, or standing, committees in a congregation. However, many of the qualities of a good committee also apply to a good task group or task force—which is, basically, a temporary committee. Committee life is ongoing and organic; when forming or reshaping a committee it can be useful to check with district staff members, Unitarian Universalist Association headquarters staff members, and email list discussions of lay leaders who hold parallel roles. Please refer to the resources list at the end of this document.

The Reasons People Serve on Committees

Whether it is explicitly recognized or not, committees and the people who serve on them have an underlying philosophy or belief about what they're doing. For some people the task element is primary. They may be particularly interested in the function or "product" of the committee and want to put their energy into this effort. Alternatively, they may have a general sense of wanting to work for the church community in some tangible way, and serving on the committee fulfills that wish.

Committee work also has a social nature. People may find committee work an opportunity to connect with others who share a similar passion, for example, in social justice or children's religious education. Thus, some people are involved because they are looking for a feeling of connection to other people and to the vital structures that make the congregation work.

Some people see themselves as actively engaged in ministry in their lives, and their committee work is part of this engagement. They see it as a part of their search for meaning and an opportunity to minister to one another. A number of congregations have changed the ways in which they look at the work of the church. They have come to see all the work of the church as ministry. This approach involves more than simply relabeling committees, of course. (For more information regarding lay ministry in the congregation, please see Jean Trumbauer's books *Sharing the Ministry: A Practical Guide for Transforming Volunteers into Ministers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999) and *Created and Called: Discovering Our Gifts for Abundant Living* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1998).)

Other people are looking for a way to develop new skills. When we ask people about their skills in a volunteer survey, we often then suggest committees that reflect things they already know how to do. Yet sometimes people would like to use their volunteer opportunities to learn something new, to explore or express a different side of themselves, or to develop a skill they do not yet have. For

example, accountants are habitually asked to serve on finance and canvass committees or as treasurer, but they may be interested in doing something else. Young adults note that they are able to use skills learned in the church context later in their careers; adults returning to the workforce after an absence for child rearing have noted similar rewards.

Another motivation in committee work is the opportunity for spiritual growth. Any time we are paying attention in a mindful way, we have the opportunity to deepen our understanding of our own spirituality and derive a sense of meaning. Some people will find this opportunity an important part of what they're doing. Some committees build into their meeting agendas a time to reflect on the task and make connections to one's spiritual journey, theology, or larger purpose.

If you are the chair of the committee, you may find it helpful to try to look at what is motivating you in your involvement, and to be mindful of what is motivating the other people on your committee. Of course, we all bring a mix of motivations, and what's primary in one moment may change in the next.

Our Commitment to Building Just Religious Communities

As Unitarian Universalists, we share a desire to be an open, welcoming, and inclusive community. Our effort toward dismantling oppression is tremendously important, yet easy to stumble over. Committees have an opportunity to address oppression in two major ways: first, in their internal workings, and second, in the viewpoint they bring to their work on behalf of the congregation.

Committees often try to constitute their membership in such a way that it represents the composition of the congregation. In this way they hope to get the fullest spectrum of voices and views involved in the work. This attempt can present any number of challenges. For example, it can be difficult to schedule meetings to accommodate those who do not drive at night and those who work during the day. You may encounter underlying conflicts within a congregation or, indeed, within the congregational culture. For example, a religious education committee may find it difficult to recruit people who are not currently parents of children in the program, or to recruit men. Another pitfall may arise when we are intentionally trying to recruit from what is a very small pool within the congregation. For example, when there was a sudden growth in awareness of ministry to young adults, these young adults sometimes found themselves being stretched too thin because every committee was trying to recruit them. In our desire to be inclusive, we need to avoid being formulaic.

People generally do not come to church to be the standard bearers for a group, although they may have a great deal to contribute in welcoming other members

of their group, and they may be willing to do so. In general, people come to church to become part of a community where they feel accepted for who they are. People come to church to enjoy the company of like-minded people, for stimulation and growth of the mind and the spirit, and for a safe place to be more authentically themselves. One man, who is one of the few openly gay men in his congregation, once stated that he became tired of being the poster child for all things gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender-queer (GLBTQ). He wished to be seen as a whole person. It is the task of all the members of the congregation to get to know one another as individuals and not to generalize types. For example, when we are in the process of searching for a minister, we are called to move "beyond categorical thinking"; this is a notion we may do well to apply to the search for committee members. (Please note: "Beyond Categorical Thinking" is a program of the Unitarian Universalist Association for congregations that are "in search" for a minister.)

Your congregation may not have members from historically marginalized groups (people of color, persons from the GLBTQ community, and others). Rather than thinking that these communities do not affect your congregation, you might want to explore ways to be more accountable to these groups. To learn more about becoming an ally in the work toward anti-oppression, go to UUA.org, go to the Leaders' Library and search for 'Ally.* For more information on developing accountability relationships, search the Leaders' Library at UUA.org for 'Accountability.* Creating relationships with people from historically marginalized groups is also a way to explore how ministry can be made more welcoming in the truest, deepest sense of the word. Ministry can welcome the whole person, as he or she is, and not require each person to change to the culture of the existing members. This area involves some of our deepest work as Unitarian Universalists.

Working toward being an anti-oppressive group takes on a whole new dimension for committees when it involves the work being done on behalf of the congregation. For example, consider whether the following are inclusive:

- Welcoming materials.
- Music selections.
- Sites and methods used to publicize services and activities.
- Times of day for adult religious education programs.

Each committee needs to intentionally incorporate anti-oppression into its work, and each has many opportunities to do so.

A primary human need is the need to grow as a person. James Luther Adams, a renowned Unitarian Universalist theologian, used to tell a story of a time he served on the board of one of our churches. It was during the civil rights

movement, and the congregation was considering adding a nondiscrimination clause to its bylaws. All night the board debated, with one member in particular adamant in his opposition. Finally, Adams asked, "What is the purpose of the church?"

The man sat back, and after a moment replied, "To get a hold of people like me and change them."

It was a moment of grace. Somehow into the midst of that long, honest, loving struggle, something miraculous entered in and showed everyone present a more open, more inclusive vision. It was not, Adams always explained, due to his brilliance as a debater. It was something unexpected—"a movement of the Spirit," he called it—and it affected him as much as it affected anyone. The merit of the board that night lay in being open to it, accepting the uncomfortable fact of their own limitations, and being willing to be changed.

We come to church to be with one another, to work toward common goals, and to grow as human beings toward something richer and more inclusive. It is the same with committees as with ourselves—indeed, sometimes it is one and the same. It happens in a struggle that is honest and loving, and it happens unexpectedly. Sometimes it is dramatic; more often it is gradual; we hardly know it is happening at all.

Actively embodying justice on our committees and in our congregations is more than a matter of checking off demographic categories. It is a matter of working from our moral values and religious yearnings, staying spiritually and physically present with one another, and remaining open to the unexpected.

The Vision and Goals of a Committee

Once a congregation has clarified its vision and mission and outlined ways it will live them out, each committee needs to clarify its own role and relationship to the overarching purpose and mission of the congregation. Without this connection to the overarching purpose, a committee can lose focus and feel disconnected or unclear about how to proceed.

Consequently, a process important to each committee is to answer these questions:

- What is the role of our committee in furthering the vision and overall purpose, or mission, of our congregation?
- What is our purpose and charter as a committee?
- How will we know that we have accomplished this purpose?

- What is the specific role of our committee in the life of the congregation?

After it has developed a mission statement or charter for itself—one that embodies and is inspired by the overall mission and vision of the congregation—the committee should ask the following:

- What are the various tasks and responsibilities of our committee that express our charter?
- What are the continuing responsibilities of our committee?
- What are the longer-term goals of our committee?
- What are the goals for this year?
- What are the specific strategies for achieving the longer-term and yearly goals of our committee?

Structuring a Committee

With charter and goals clarified, a committee can delineate its responsibilities. The tasks for clarifying responsibilities include the following:

- Establishing the roles and responsibilities of the committee.
- Determining which short-term or intermittent task groups need to exist within or outside the committee membership to accomplish both routine and special projects.
- Recruiting new members for the committee or task groups.

In the process of clarifying its goals and responsibilities, the committee can determine the frequency and length of committee meetings, its responsibilities between committee meetings, and how the committee will communicate with other committees.

The committee also will need to decide if it will have a chair or co-chairs (unless this is decided by the board), or facilitators. Will it have a permanent secretary, or will this role be filled on an ad hoc or rotating basis? Some committees choose to have a person who focuses on the group process during committee meetings to help when the meeting bogs down or when an idea has been inadvertently dropped. This person also can provide feedback at the end of the meeting on how the committee seems to be functioning. (For ideas on holding productive and enjoyable meetings, see *Meetings That Work: Make Them Meaningful and Productive*, at UUA.org by going to the Leaders' Library and by searching "Meetings that Work."*)

Recruiting and Nurturing Committee Members

When you become the chair of an ongoing committee, you will find that many

activities are planned, more need to be planned, and important tasks need to be accomplished. Actually, the most vital task of a committee chair may be to recruit and groom the next chair, just as the most vital task of the committee may be to develop future members of the committee. This idea may not be intuitive, because the group is charged with a specific task or tasks, such as publicity or religious education. Yet if we forget about recruiting, we become subject to various pitfalls: Institutional memory may be lost if the committee becomes subject to burnout or key members leave; others may perceive the committee as a closed group, even if there's no such intention; and we may end up missing an opportunity to see the tasks through new eyes.

Recruiting is an ongoing process of keeping alert for others who seem interested in the committee's tasks, or others who you feel may have a fresh perspective on those tasks. There are some potentially useful tools for this process. Many congregations run a Committee Fair early in the program year, where each committee staffs a table at the regular coffee hour to better make itself known to the congregation. Some congregations conduct periodic surveys of the membership that include soliciting members' interest in various committees. A volunteer or membership coordinator on the congregation's staff, a volunteer (or leadership) development committee, or both may coordinate volunteers and can be an active partner in this process.

New members are often asked about their interests in various committees. There is an ongoing debate about the best approach to involving new members in committee work. Getting new members involved quickly in the "tasks" of the church seems to be one of the best ways to incorporate and retain the new members, because it encourages them to feel needed. However, recent trends toward shared ministry underscore that new members come not to be busier but to be part of a community. Each congregation will need to seek its way among these approaches. Because of the demographic factors at work, including issues of generation or class, it is unlikely that one approach will fit all members of a congregation. Examples of generation or class factors include working parents or people who need to work more than one job to make a living and thus might not have time for committee work.

Paying attention to one another and good listening are not just helpful for the process of getting the work done but also crucial in allowing people to feel that they have been heard and that their work and contributions are appreciated. Committees have tasks to take care of, and committee meetings will necessarily focus on those tasks. But the small things that we can do to recognize one another as persons help to make a stronger committee and to create a committee that people want to serve on.

Some committees will begin their meetings with some form of invocation,

whether it be lighting a chalice or candle, sharing a reading, or both. Many committees have a time of check-in, during which members briefly share what has been happening in their lives since the last meeting or how they are doing that day. This activity makes it easier to transition from daily life to the committee meeting. It also allows the group to hear important things going on in people's lives, in light of what is being asked of them in their committee work. Hearing others' check-in helps the members of the group make important connections concerning resources people inadvertently mention that could help the committee, as well as prevents burnout when it is evident that a committee member is in crisis.

Working to prevent burnout may be the single greatest gift committee members can give to one another. Pay attention to how the workload is being distributed. The chair occasionally may want to pass around a list of some ongoing tasks, such as preparing minutes, to find out who has the energy to do them. For more information on effective committee meetings, see *Meetings That Work: Make Them Meaningful and Productive* at UUA.org by going to the Leaders' Library and by searching "Meetings that Work."*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ways to Help Volunteers Feel Good About Helping

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Help Volunteers"*

Planning and Budgeting for Committees

In addition to its current tasks, a committee needs to plan ahead for the next year. Most committees find that their work fits into some rhythm within the congregation's program year, and they can use that rhythm as the bones of their plan. Then details can be added as time unfolds and the plans develop.

A committee that keeps track of its budget on an ongoing basis will find the budgeting process easier. Also, the more clearly documented a budget request is, the more consideration it is likely to receive when funds are being allocated.

Making Decisions

A committee's decision-making process can be formal or informal, but it should be clearly understood by all members. It is important to the health of the committee, as well as to the outcome of its work, that everyone know when a decision has been made and what that decision was. This goal can be reached through formal rules of procedure or simply by the secretary stating, "So we

have agreed that” An alternative is a consensus process, such as the one found at First Parish in Lexington, Unitarian Universalist (see www.fplex.org/consensusintro.shtml). Whatever the method, any ambiguities should be resolved at the time of discussion and before moving on to other business.

The importance of good record keeping cannot be understated. The effort of taking and providing minutes is essential to a well-functioning committee. It is through the minutes that members who were absent can follow up. The minutes can clarify what previous decisions were made, and they provide the institutional memory for the future.

A Congregation's Committees

Committees are the vehicles for a congregation to accomplish its mission, both within the congregation and in the community that it aims to serve. Because ministry is a shared endeavor that engages members in distinct ways in the work of the congregation, congregations need committees that channel the individual talents and qualities of their members into the congregation’s common work.

Congregational polity is a vital part of the Unitarian Universalist tradition. It informs and inspires our understanding that a congregation is not a geographic parish but a group of people who have covenanted to walk together the path of faith. Congregations are responsible for making decisions that determine their direction. Moreover, congregations must be responsible stewards of their resources. They must provide opportunities for promoting the spiritual growth of their membership and for engaging the membership in an effective witness and service to our Unitarian Universalist values within the community. Without a way to channel the ideals, talents, and responsibilities of its members, a congregation may never be able to fully embody its purpose.

One role of a congregation is to develop leadership, service attitudes, and skills among its membership for the sake of the congregation and the community that the congregation aims to serve. Committees are a way to help develop leadership—an undertaking that is often undervalued when a congregation focuses only on its internal needs and does not claim its full mission in the context of other institutions in the community.

Determining Your Congregation's Committees

A congregation needs to fulfill certain functions, among them the following:

- Making sure that there is a weekly worship service and doing whatever needs to be done to make that happen.
- Raising the money to keep the congregation going.
- Making sure that the existence of the congregation and its activities, including worship services, are publicized.
- Maintaining the facilities of the congregation.
- Greeting people who come to worship services, providing information about the congregation, and building a bridge to membership.
- Providing for the religious education of children and adults.
- Providing outreach to members who are experiencing illness, loss, or other personal difficulties.

These sorts of tasks are the purview of standing committees, as they are primary, ongoing efforts of the congregation. There are many different ways to organize committees to accomplish these tasks. Each congregation will create the set of committees it needs to accomplish the necessary tasks.

The size of the congregation is one factor that inevitably plays a role in determining what committees a congregation establishes. A very small group might cluster several tasks into the hands of one committee or “team,” whereas a larger congregation would separate them. For example, in a smaller group, one committee might handle recruiting Sunday morning speakers and leaders, providing liturgical support, overseeing the music, taking care of the aesthetics and necessities such as water, handling programs, and sending announcements to the local newspaper. In a larger church, separate subcommittees might fulfill each of these functions.

It may be useful to provide some coordination between separate committees. In this case, a council structure may be of benefit. Another logical grouping would be a caring committee, membership committee, greeters, ushers, and publicity. Building and grounds is often grouped with finances and long-range planning. It is often helpful to group committees whose primary task is programming—for example, social justice, adult religious education or lifespan religious education, young adult, and singles programming.

The benefit a small congregation gets when it clusters a number of tasks into the work of a single committee is more than just labor savings. The congregation also gets a sense of cohesiveness in the ways the various tasks are accomplished. The council structure in a larger church can provide the same sort of cohesiveness, as the work of the various constituent committees hangs together as a whole.

It may be helpful to periodically assess existing committees in the congregation by asking the following questions:

- Do the congregation's committees express the congregation's overarching mission?
- Is each committee clear about its purpose and charter?
- Do the committees function and operate to achieve their purpose?
- Are both financial and volunteer resources allocated in a way that expresses the congregation's mission initiatives and priorities?
- Would it be best to restructure some committees into task forces?
- Are leadership and service opportunities available to members of the congregation? Are lay ministry opportunities available?

Standing and Ad Hoc Committees

There are two main types of committees: standing committees and ad hoc committees. Standing committees handle ongoing, ever-present needs of the congregation, whereas ad hoc committees are constituted for a particular task and are generally of limited duration. Currently, an ad hoc committee is often called a task force. Unless otherwise noted, the term committee in this text refers to a standing committee.

Board–Committee Relationships

In most states, the congregation's bylaws will specifically create a need for a nominating committee and will detail how its membership should be appointed. In some cases the bylaws may enumerate other standing committees, but generally standing committees are created by the board. Sometimes a committee will be created at the grassroots level from the congregation. Such a committee may end up as an affiliate interest group, or it may become recognized as a standing committee of the church.

Similarly, the membership of committees may arise in different ways. The church board may appoint all the members of the committee. This procedure is common for nominating committees and for task forces. Other committees may be self-renewing, making it the responsibility of current members to recruit new members to the committee. Some committees may select their own chair; sometimes the board will choose the chair or confirm the chair that has been selected from within the committee.

Most often, standing committees report formally to the board and, through it, to the congregation each year. This formal reporting is usually in preparation for the annual meeting. Some congregations appoint a board liaison to each standing committee to increase communication. In a council structure, the liaison represents the board at the council meetings. A standing committee should

expect to submit a budget request to the board as part of the yearly budgeting process.

Congregations may choose to have a staff liaison with some or all committees. This arrangement can prove very helpful in matters of scheduling and procedures. Some committees may have a particularly strong staff relationship; examples are the director of religious education and the religious education committee; the office manager or administrator and the buildings and grounds or publicity committee; and the music director or choir director and the music committee. It is important in these cases that all individuals involved maintain a clear understanding of who is responsible for supervising the employee. For more information, see Gary L. McIntosh's book *Staff Your Church for Growth*, which is listed among the resources of this guide. For more information on staffing models and for information on staff compensation for Unitarian Universalist congregations, go to UUA.org, go to the Leaders' Library, and search for "Staff Compensation."*

Many congregations have affinity groups that function much as committees do. They have an ongoing mission, have meetings, recruit members, plan events, and so on. However, they are not official committees of the congregation. Nonetheless, we hope that some of the material contained in this guide will be helpful to these affinity groups.

The Roles and Responsibilities of Committees

Membership Committee

One of the most important committees in a congregation is the membership committee. If we believe that our Unitarian Universalist message is sorely needed in the wider world, then this committee is one of the keys to reach newcomers and ensure they have the best possible experience as they explore congregational life.

Although the charge of the membership committee varies from one congregation to another, it is usually responsible for contacting potential new members, welcoming newcomers, and recognizing and helping to integrate new members into the life of the congregation. This committee works closely with the publicity and hospitality committees and, if they exist, with the minister, volunteer coordinator, or both.

The typical membership committee's job is as follows:

- As committee members, to be well versed in the principles of Unitarian Universalism, the nature of the local congregation, and its

programs and emphasis, and to be able to formulate reasons for people to join.

- To welcome newcomers and help them get acquainted with one another and with the congregation's existing members and friends.
- To survey the community to discover areas (geographic, economic, social, and political) in which potential new members might be found.
- To search out potential new members.
- To develop means of approaching people not affiliated with a church who might find a focus and association in the Unitarian Universalist religion.
- To plan orientation programs for individuals new to Unitarian Universalism, such as the New UU class.
- To plan with the minister, the congregation president, and the worship committee for suitable recognition of new members.
- To examine the membership roll and assist in keeping it current, and to maintain contact with members whose participation may be waning.

Ideally, every member of the congregation would be on the membership committee. Realistically, this committee should have at least 3 hard-working members for a small congregation and 5 to 7 members for a congregation of 150 or more. The size of the committee also depends on its responsibilities.

Members of the membership committee should be personable, outgoing, articulate, and enthusiastic Unitarian Universalists. A membership committee that reflects the full range of the demographic makeup of the congregation is more effective in working with a variety of newcomers. It is also valuable to have at least one brand-new member of the congregation on the committee, as well as longer-term members.

The ways in which the membership committee carries out its responsibilities also vary from congregation to congregation. Generally, the committee members discover newcomers, greet them, and introduce them to members who can be counted on to help them get acquainted and answer their questions with friendly intelligence. Committee members encourage newcomers to sign a guest book—making it clear that it is not the membership book—or to fill out a pew card.

The committee may be responsible for maintaining a rack of pamphlets about Unitarian Universalism and preparing an attractive brochure about the local congregation to be added to the pamphlet rack. For information about stocking up on pamphlets about Unitarian Universalism, please see UUA.org/bookstore/. The committee selects a way to follow up with visitors—a personal note, a telephone call, a special invitation to a congregational event, or all three options

in succession. The committee also sees that the visitors' names are added to the mailing list if they wish to receive the congregation's newsletter.

At least once a year, and more often for large or rapidly growing congregations, the membership committee should sponsor an orientation for newcomers who wish to know more about Unitarian Universalism and the local congregation. These sessions should be carefully planned to involve newcomers and longer-term members, who will share personal religious views and explore together the liberal religious heritage. The newcomers will also hear about the programs and organizational structure of the local congregation. In addition, as personal interests, needs, and skills of newcomers become known, the membership committee should see that they are invited to social events, special programs, interest groups, work parties, or committee meetings.

Some newcomers soon indicate an interest in becoming members. Others wait for an invitation. And still others prefer to take their time in joining. The membership committee should be ready to explain what is involved in joining when newcomers ask and should extend the invitation when the time seems right to newcomers who do not ask. Although we do not want to pressure people to join, some people who attend fairly regularly have never become members because it was never suggested to them or they were never asked.

Most often, the work of the membership committee involves getting a member through the joining process. Many membership committees run mentoring programs of limited duration for new members. Rarely is the committee actively involved in the continued, deepening stages of membership development, such as finding one's ministry within the congregation and in one's daily life and fostering ever-deepening connections to one's religious community and spiritual path. But membership committees may find it beneficial to actively understand the retention of members. It can be difficult to help members articulate why they are staying or leaving, why they are becoming more or less involved, or what aspects of congregational life are calling to them and where they feel a sense of emptiness. The membership committee often has the skills to undertake this task. In addition to the direct benefits to members and the possible improved communication and congregational life, helping members understand their relationship to the congregation may provide insights that will prove useful to the committee's primary task of welcoming new members.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Closing the Back Door to Keep Members You Add

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Back Door"*

Create Memorable Moments To Welcome New Members

[UUA.org](#) > Leaders' Library> search "Memorable Moments"*

Greet Visitors Thoughtfully to Build Feeling of Welcome

[UUA.org](#) > Leaders' Library> search "Greet"*

Meaningful Meetings That Work

[UUA.org](#) > Leaders' Library> search "Meetings that Work"*

Mentoring and Friendship Programs Aid New Members

[UUA.org](#) > Leaders' Library> search "Mentoring"*

Seven Tools Help Churches Welcome Newcomers

[UUA.org](#) >Leaders' Library> search "Seven Tools"*

Religious Education Committee (Lifespan Faith Development Committee)

In many congregations the work of the religious education committee has the entire lifespan as its scope and includes programming for children, youth, and adults. In these congregations a lifespan faith development committee deals with program development, teacher and leader recruitment, and publicity for programming.

Other congregations use a model of separate committees for adult religious education and religious education for children and youth. Sometimes the adult religious education committee is a subcommittee of the religious education committee. In either case, regular communication between committees dealing with religious education programming for children, youth, and adults is important. A joint retreat once a year is an excellent way to affirm common vision and support particular plans. Some larger congregations have a religious education council.

A religious education committee, even in the smallest congregation, should be composed of at least three members to share the preparations and celebrations. The committee formation can start by finding out who might be interested in the religious education program, taking care not to limit the search to parents. Adults without children, older teenagers, and grandparents in the congregation may also be interested. Often these members need encouragement and assurance that they are indeed welcome in the children's religious education program. As

religious education ultimately is the responsibility of the entire congregation, be sure to invite the congregation's leadership or minister to participate.

The work of the religious education committee generally includes setting goals, objectives, and a philosophy for the programs it establishes. The following may be included in its responsibilities:

- Considering the interests and needs of all members: children, youth, young adults (ages eighteen to thirty-five), adults, and elders.
- Becoming familiar with the religious education materials available from the Unitarian Universalist Association, from other congregations, and elsewhere.
- Assessing the interests and skills available among members within the congregation that can be used in program development, program leadership, and promotion of the program.
- Designing a program for the year—and even considering a several-year sequence, in rotation—that is well balanced and adapted to the needs and interests of various segments of the congregation and that also uses available resources.
- Involving the constituents of various programs (children, parents, youth, young adults, singles, older adults, and so on) in recommending program ideas and plans.
- Locating leadership for various aspects of the program and providing orientation, training, and support for this leadership.
- Arranging for necessary class or meeting space and working with congregational leaders to create an appropriate learning environment in that space.
- Arranging for necessary equipment and supplies.
- Coordinating a schedule that considers other congregational events and programs.
- Evaluating the program in a way that includes feedback from participants and leaders.
- Planning for professional religious education leadership, when feasible, and covenanting with that religious educator in ways that will continually enhance the congregation's ability to meet the religious education needs of its members. For information on religious education covenanting, please see UUA.org, go to the Leaders' Library, and search Covenanting." *
- Planning programs with the congregation's leadership so that dynamic religious education programming can be an expression of the congregation's guiding vision and sense of mission, and be a means of outreach into the surrounding community.

The religious education committee is a very important committee in the life of a congregation. Its members need to have the vision, skills, and commitment to

fulfill its important responsibilities. In the beginning, of course, not all committee functions mentioned may be necessary for your program, but as your program grows, the scope of the committee's work will evolve.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Adult Religious Education Key to Forming Bonds

[UUA.org](#) > Leaders' Library> search "Adult Religious Education"*

Congregations Find Summer Worship, RE Resources at CLF

[UUA.org](#) >Leaders' Library> search "Summer Worship"*

Make Teaching RE Fun To Attract New Volunteers

[UUA.org](#) >Leaders' Library> search "Teaching RE"*

Safe Congregation Policies Protect Children, Adults

[UUA.org](#) >Leaders' Library> search "Safe Congregation"*

Social Justice Committee

A job description enables the members of a social justice committee to understand the tasks and functions of their group. The beginning of the program year is a good time to write or revise the job description. Writing a job description reminds longtime members of what they are supposed to accomplish and provides new committee members a chance to learn the tasks of the group.

The following are elements of a job description for your social justice committee, which you can adapt to your own congregation:

- Choose a minimum number of members.
- Decide upon duration and number of terms of office for committee members.
- Develop a budget to allocate the financial resources of the committee.
- Select a leadership structure.
- Determine the purpose of the social justice committee (for example, to inform and educate congregation members and the public in areas of social concern; to find ways and means to rectify social injustices; to sponsor and support groups organized to deal with social problems; and to develop informed leaders to foster a just and peaceful world).
- Examine the best means of coordination with other corporate bodies, both internal and external to the congregation. (Members of the

committee will serve as liaisons to the board of trustees, the congregation council, the congregation's Unitarian Universalist Association district, and the local Interfaith Coalition for Peace and Justice.)

- Provide opportunities for members and friends of the congregation to participate in social service projects, including collecting money, donating food and clothing, and supporting senior citizen and youth programs.
- Conduct educational programs (worship services, seminars, and forums) to raise the congregation's consciousness about social issues.
- Enable members and friends of the congregation to witness about social issues, including writing letters to and visiting elected officials, writing letters to the editor, signing petitions, participating in demonstrations, and testifying at public hearings.
- Encourage members and friends of the congregation to organize in order to change systems of oppression and injustice.
- Research and analyze social justice issues in depth. Develop action strategies to achieve significant results.
- Develop public statements in the name of the committee or, where appropriate, in the name of the congregation.
- Publicize what is being done so that members of the congregation and the wider community know what is happening and how they can become involved.
- Use the special talents of congregation members and local citizens to implement change. Many members are gifted problem solvers, organizers, and researchers; others enjoy doing hands-on work such as fence mending, typing, serving food, or staying at an overnight shelter.
- Train people in organizational and social-change skills.
- Ensure that the congregation building is used to facilitate social change: Have special programs take place in the building; open the building for meetings of community groups; and allow controversial groups whose purposes are congruent with the congregation's vision to meet in the building.
- Make sure the congregation's financial resources are used for positive moral ends, such as investing endowment funds ethically, fund-raising for community projects, purchasing supplies from organizations involved in social change, purchasing environmentally safe products, and using the congregational building to support bail bonds.
- Develop links with, and use, the resources of denominational social change groups (for example, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, Cambridge Forum, Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office, and Unitarian Universalist Peace Network).

- Create alliances with community organizations (for example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP]; National Organization for Women [NOW]; Rainbow Coalition; Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays [PFLAG]; American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU]; and churches, synagogues, and ecumenical and interfaith groups).
- Educate members of the congregation on the use of the financial resources of the congregation to bring about social change.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Creating a Justice-Seeking Congregation

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Justice Seeking"*

JUUST Change Anti-Oppression Consultancy and Resources

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "JUUST Change"*

Social Justice Resources for Your Congregation

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Justice Resources"*

Worship Committee (Sunday Service Committee)

What happens in Sunday services is significant to the life and well-being of the congregation. Inspiration, intellectual challenge, spiritual nourishment, community belonging, intergenerational connections, continuity with the Unitarian Universalist faith, and an expression of the living tradition of Unitarian Universalism are all possible. What happens in worship can energize and affirm members and their families, deepening their sense of belonging and commitment. What happens will also give visitors their crucial first impression of what Unitarian Universalism and a specific congregation are like, so in planning worship services try to ensure that visitors make a return visit and have a desire to know more. An overarching recommendation is to pay attention to detail, which communicates that you care enough about what you are doing to do it well.

Often, small lay-led congregations have a Sunday service committee or worship committee with the significant responsibility of providing for the service every Sunday. The schedule is often coordinated by one person, who uses the musical, speaking, and other skills of committee members as needed. In such cases, the Sunday service tends to be topical, with the subject related to who has been invited. Guest speakers are often not Unitarian Universalists, so attention needs

to be paid to creating continuity and a sense of relatedness to Unitarian Universalism every Sunday.

Even the smallest congregation should deliberately and regularly schedule a visiting Unitarian Universalist minister to conduct the service. The funds to provide for this visit should be deemed as important as paying the heating bill. The Church of the Larger Fellowship's Church on Loan program also offers, as a subscription series, a variety of Sunday services and audiovisual resources appropriate for Unitarian Universalist congregations. This do-it-yourself service provides readings, a children's story, a sermon, and other resources that a lay leader can rehearse and read in order to plan a high-quality service.

Worship committees of small congregations should also maintain a library of worship resources readily available to members who are conducting services. Anthologies and other sources of inspirational readings and service components are available from the Unitarian Universalist Association Bookstore. Committee members should not be expected to pay for these resources themselves.

Larger congregations with ministers sometimes leave the Sunday morning service entirely to the minister. Others have a worship committee that provides a service monthly or on special occasions. Still others have a worship committee that works closely with the minister in planning all or some of the services.

During a minister's sabbatical leave, a worship committee can become even more active. The UUA Department of Ministry has published a Sabbatical Leave Handbook, available from the Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association (UUMA). A booklet titled Handbook on Sabbatical Leaves for Ministers & Congregations, edited by David Pohl and Helen Cohen, is available through the administrator of the UUMA, at administrator@uuma.org. At the time of writing it costs \$10.00. Worship committees should review the recommendations outlined in this manual, preferably a year before the sabbatical begins.

Membership on the worship committee also varies among congregations. Many larger congregations include representatives from the music, decoration, intergenerational, public address and lighting, and dramatic committees, so the service is planned from a holistic perspective. Even highly liturgical services will be enhanced by high-quality live music and a variety of readers who reflect the congregation's diversity.

Many Unitarian Universalist congregations are providing space for adults and children to be together during some part of the Sunday service. An intergenerational activity may or may not include a children's story, but it can include a family chalice lighting ceremony, music, and reading before the children leave for their own religious education program. Such an activity

provides an opportunity for families to sit together and fosters the idea that the Sunday service is a place where people of every age are vital to the congregation's sense of community.

The worship committee may make recommendations to the congregation about the music, welcoming procedures for visitors, child care and children's religious education programming, the aesthetics of the meeting place, the coffee hour, and equipment such as a public address system. The committee should function with quality control in mind. Some committees, for example, require that a rehearsal be held for special services in which a minister is not involved.

The committee might also come to the point where it recommends that the congregation offer two Sunday services instead of one. Many congregations resist the idea of having two services, because they feel that the congregation will be divided. Yet if the congregation wishes for continued growth, it has to accommodate a larger number of participants. Crowded church schools and a lack of parking spaces (except in urban congregations, where the situation is different) can also be symptoms that require attention; otherwise the congregation may well experience a plateau in membership while it grows older each year. Some congregations have alternative services on weekday evenings. Adding Worship Services: A How-to Manual has been published by the Unitarian Universalist Association's Office of New Congregation and Growth Resources. To find out more, go to UUA.org, go to the Leaders' Library, and search "Adding Worship."*

Advance planning is essential for worship committees. The larger the congregation, the longer the time frame required. Last-minute planning reduces quality. Mid-size and larger congregations, for example, should focus on what to plan for Christmas holiday services during a meeting early in the January before that year's holidays. This allows time for obtaining special services from individuals and helps evaluate past experiences that are still fresh in the minds of the participants.

Worship committees in smaller congregations might meet quarterly. Each meeting allows time for making last-minute arrangements for services to be held within the next three months, beginning with the next Sunday, as well as for advance planning for services to be held in three to six months.

A worship committee should not be afraid to evaluate. People are always reluctant to critique an individual's contribution. Tact is always important, of course, but too often sloppiness or a participant's unpreparedness detract from quality and give the impression that those responsible do not really care what happens. A good exercise is to ask new members or visitors periodically how they felt about what happened on a particular Sunday in terms of quality.

Sometimes even a small fine-tuning of a routine can make a great difference in the overall result of the experience for everyone.

The worship committee can be one of the most exciting areas of involvement for members if it is empowered and supported by the minister or ministers and the lay leaders of the congregation. Worship is the place where so many aspects of our faith come together publicly. The key is finding opportunities to balance innovation (which makes our faith come alive for younger generations) and tradition (where the tried and true still move the soul). Both innovation and tradition flourish in congregations that see worship as a living, vibrant expression of Unitarian Universalism.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Adding Worship Services: A How-to Manual

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Adding Worship"*

Congregations Find Summer Worship, RE Resources at CLF

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Summer Worship"*

Handbook on Sabbatical Leaves

www.uuma.org/main/txtpublications.htm

Interconnections Resources: Frequently Asked Questions About Worship/Music

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Questions about Worship"*

WorshipWeb (on-line resources for worship)

UUA.org/worshipweb/main.html

Committee on Ministry (Ministerial Relations Committee)

Many congregations have either a committee on ministry or a ministerial relations committee to assist and work with the professional minister or ministers. In theory, a committee on ministry focuses on all aspects of the congregation's ministry, including professional leadership, music, social justice, religious education, and pastoral care. The committee on ministry tends to function as a vision or oversight group. The ministerial relations committee, in contrast, tends to be an advocate for, and a support and guidance group to, the minister or ministers. Such a committee serves as a communication channel

between the minister and the congregation. The focus of this committee generally is limited to professional ministers, rather than to the overall state of the congregation's ministry. More recently, an increasing number of congregations have opted for committees on ministry, as ministry is increasingly seen as a shared effort and not the sole responsibility of the professional, ordained ministerial staff.

The purpose of a committee on ministry is to strengthen the quality of ministry in the congregation. In establishing the committee, the minister submits to the governing board a list of six names, any of whom would be satisfactory. The governing board appoints three of those individuals to the committee. Another possibility is for the minister and the board to submit six names to each other and to both agree on the final three individuals to constitute the committee. Other models for submitting names are possible, but it is vital for both parties to play a part in selection.

When a minister is new, it is sometimes the practice to invite members of the ministerial search committee to fill some positions on the committee on ministry for the first six months so that the minister will have an opportunity to get to know congregation members before making nominations. However, once committee members are nominated and chosen, they must have the confidence of both minister and congregation.

The term of office for committee members should be sufficiently long to enable them to get to know the minister well and to develop effective ways of working together as a committee and with the minister. Terms should be staggered so that there is never a need to start over with an entirely new committee. To fill a vacancy on the committee, the minister may submit to the governing board a list of three names, from which to choose one.

The committee should meet monthly, with a regular agenda for each meeting. Monthly meetings with a regularly scheduled review of different items avoids a crisis orientation in the work of the committee and the eyes of minister and congregation. A regular agenda helps the discussion to be focused and goal oriented.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information, see the print and Web-based document "Joint Recommendations Concerning Ministerial Agreements" at UUA.org by going to the Leaders' Library and by searching "Joint Recommendations"* in section E, "The Committee on Ministry." The Joint Recommendations document was produced jointly by the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA) and the Ministry and Professional Leadership staff group of the Unitarian Universalist

Association. For further information, please contact the Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Committee on Ministry Not Just for the Minister

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Committee on Ministry"*

Youth Adult Committee (YAC)

One of the best ways to oversee youth programming in a congregation is with a youth adult committee (YAC). YACs remove some advance planning and decision making from the unwieldy context of the regular youth group meeting.

Ask the youth group to elect representatives to serve on the YAC. In a smaller youth group, simply invite interested members to serve on the committee. The selected youth and a few outside adults (a representative from the religious education committee, a board member, a parent, or other interested adults) meet to come up with ideas for programs and activities, to make sure that commitments are kept and projects completed, to select and supervise advisors, and to act as a forum for discussion of youth-related concerns in the congregation.

The advisors and the director of religious education automatically serve on the committee. Maintain a ratio of three youths to one adult on the committee to help foster youth leadership and engender youth ownership of the programming. For more information, go to UUA.org/YRUU.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

How to Create a Youth-Adult Committee

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Youth-Adult Committee"*

The Local Youth Group Program Handbook

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Local Youth Group"*

Welcome to Young Religious Unitarian Universalists on the Web!

UUA.org/YRUU/news.html

Finance Committee

Typically, the finance function includes responsibility for fund-raising, budgeting, pledge record keeping, bookkeeping, and finance. It is advisable to assign different people to these areas. The type of person who enjoys record keeping is often not the same person who enjoys fund-raising, and vice versa.

In most congregations the finance committee is responsible for the management of financial resources. Occasionally this committee is also responsible for raising funds from the members each year to finance the operating budget. It is recommended that congregations separate these functions into two committees.

An effective finance committee works with all standing committees of the congregation to develop a budget, which is referred to the governing board and voted on by the membership. Ideally, the budget will be based on the congregation's chosen vision and mission (refer to page 7, "The Vision and Goals of a Committee"). In addition to developing a budget, the finance committee monitors the congregation's income, expenses, and pledge payments, and it makes regular reports to the board and the congregation.

The finance committee should arrange for an annual audit or review of the financial records by an independent accountant or financial agency. The finance committee may also take responsibility for securing property and liability insurance for congregational facilities. It is often responsible for outside rental of the congregation's facilities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Congregational Fundraising Services

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Congregational Fundraising"*

Denominational Affairs Committee

The primary responsibility of the denominational affairs committee is to provide a liaison between the congregation and both the Unitarian Universalist Association and the district. The committee meets to discuss issues of denominational concern. It promotes education on Unitarian Universalist General Assembly resolutions in collaboration with other committees. It fosters an understanding of, and a commitment to, what it means to be a responsible member of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. Through these efforts, the denominational affairs committee prepares a pool of people in the congregation to be delegates to the General Assembly and to district meetings.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Every Member Canvass Committee

The every member canvass committee plays a critical function in assuring the congregation's quality of life. It is responsible for providing members with an opportunity to contribute financially so that the goals of the congregation may be realized. This committee works best when it views itself as having a year-round function. A new committee should be convened as soon as the canvass is completed. The committee has six main areas of responsibility.

The every member canvass committee should begin its year with a joint meeting of the retiring members and new members to conduct a canvass evaluation. The evaluation should include a review of the process: What went right? What can be done better? Did people understand their roles? Did they fulfill their responsibilities? A second component of this meeting is a financial evaluation. How much was raised? How many pledges

- Increased?
- Stayed the same?
- Decreased?
- Dropped out?
- Were new?

The committee needs to look for patterns that indicate areas in which the canvass needs improvement.

The committee is responsible for developing a calendar and timetable for canvass activities and for coordinating these with the congregation's master calendar. The committee also coordinates activities with the long-range planning and finance committees and works with them to develop canvass materials. The committee recruits, trains, and manages canvassers. It plans and conducts canvass gatherings, including campaign kickoffs, canvasser training, and postcampaign celebrations.

Communication is one of the critical functions of the every member canvass committee. The congregation needs to be clear about its dreams for the coming year and what is needed from the membership for these dreams to come true. Information needs to be positive, upbeat, inspiring, and frequent. It should be communicated in a variety of formats: information sessions, pulpit testimonials, newsletter articles, brochures, and invitations. The committee should strive to ensure that every printed piece is attractive, appealing, and readable—especially the pledge card. The committee needs to communicate success to the

congregation. Whenever possible, the congregation should celebrate its ability to fund its dreams.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Call on Dreams and Spirit To Build Canvass Results

[UUA.org](#) >Leaders' Library> search "Dreams and Spirit"*

Congregational Fundraising Services

[UUA.org](#) >Leaders' Library> search "Congregational Fundraising"*

Fundraising with a Vision: A Canvass Guide for Congregations, by Edward B. Landreth

UUA.org/bookstore/product_info.php?products_id=265

New Canvass Guide

[UUA.org](#) >Leaders' Library> search "Canvass Guide"*

Responsible Money Focus Helps Fellowship Thrive

[UUA.org](#) >Leaders' Library> search "Responsible Money"*

Long-Range Planning Committee

The long-range planning committee develops and facilitates a process to determine a congregation's future. The result of this process, which will include contributions from the congregation's membership and special focus groups, is a long-range planning report. In this report, the committee makes recommendations to the board, and probably the entire congregation, based on the results of the long-range planning process.

The long-range planning committee may be a standing committee or a special issue committee. If the long-range planning committee is a standing committee of the congregation, its members should serve for staggered terms of approximately three years. Occasionally, a special long-range planning task force can be established in a congregation as a short-term committee, appointed to work on a particular critical issue that the congregation is facing (for example, whether or not to move to another location).

The long-range planning committee is in charge of developing a vision, gathering information, formulating crucial questions, determining critical facts to be considered, posing possible solutions, considering the congregation's reactions, shaping final recommendations, and taking those recommendations to the board and the congregation for a vote.

The long-range planning committee has to determine how to engage itself and the congregation in a long-range planning process to do the following:

- Obtain the information it needs.
- Solicit ideas from the congregation.
- Involve the congregation in exploring new possibilities.
- Help build support for new possibilities and recommendations that come from the long-range planning process.

Rather than attempting to develop a committee that is representative of different groups within a congregation, attempt to find people who can respect diverse opinions, are able to listen to others, have good communication skills, and are widely respected within the congregation.

The long-range plan that results from the process should be subject to annual review, revision, and extension. The long-range planning committee will oversee the process of annual revisions. The committee raises questions to the board, congregational leadership, and the congregation such as, "Are we meeting our goals? If not, why not?" and "Are our vision and strategies for the future still sound? If not, what changes are needed?" Because implementing and monitoring the long-range plan are critical to its success, the long-range planning committee should be a standing committee.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Strategic Plans Are Key to Congregations' Future

[UUA.org](#) >Leaders' Library> search "Strategic Plans"*

Mann, Alice and Gil Rendle. Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations, by Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2003.

www.alban.org/BookDetails.asp?ID=1803

Nominating Committee

The bylaws of the congregation, in accordance with individual state laws, will generally specify the composition of the nominating committee, its duties, a time

line, and the procedures to be followed by the committee as it develops a slate for the congregation's elected positions. In some congregations, the nominating committee meets only to prepare the slate for the annual meeting; in other congregations, the nominating committee meets throughout the year to identify leadership for a variety of committees and roles. The public face of leadership is important in determining who will feel at home in that congregation. Changing a nominating committee to include members of historically marginalized groups can help make members of those groups feel welcome.

A nominating committee engaged in year-round service would likely serve the roles of the leadership development or volunteer development committee, discussed on page 33 of this document.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Nominating Committee: Making It Work for You

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Nominating Committee"*

Music Committee

The music committee is usually responsible for the budget for sheet music, as well as for engaging outside musicians. The group generally works with the music director, the choir director, or both. The music committee may also help to set the tone for the range of music included in the weekly services.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Building a Music Program Takes Vision, Time, Talent

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Music Program"*

Frequently Asked Questions About Worship/Music

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Worship/Music"*

How to Build a Music Ministry

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Music Ministry"*

Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network

UUA.org/uumn/

Caring Committee (Pastoral Care Committee)

The caring committee or pastoral care committee provides caring support for those who are in need. The committee responds in times of grief and loss, of illness, and of changes in a relationship or employment. This committee or its chair works closely with the minister.

Members of the caring committee respond in various ways:

- Members of this committee often visit the ill or the homebound. Often they are a clearinghouse of information when someone is ill so that a family is not overwhelmed by calls and visits. They often send cards on behalf of the congregation.
- In some congregations they deliver meals for those in situations of acute loss or illness.
- Some congregations have a parish nurse program.
- Some committees provide trained pastoral listeners.
- The committee may coordinate support groups for caretakers or for those suffering from various illnesses.
- They may sponsor a periodic worship service focused on pastoral support.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Beyond Casseroles: Caring Committees That Work

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Beyond Casseroles"*

Example of What a Caring Committee Can Offer a Congregation

www.eruuf.org/CaringCommittee.htm

Frequently Asked Questions About Pastoral Care

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Pastoral Care"*

Parish Nursing Adds to Congregational Programs

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Parish Nursing"*

Young Adult and Campus Ministry Committee

Young adult and campus ministries help congregations be truly intergenerational. The typical campus ministry is facilitated by one or more congregationally based adults, often termed coordinators. Although those people are the most visible part of the ministry, the campus ministry will have a greater presence in the hearts and minds of the congregation, and greater staying power, if there is a

fully functioning young adult and campus ministry committee at work. Young adult ministries can be based in a congregation or a group of congregations for a metropolitan area. For more information, please see UUA.org/ya-cm.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Welcome Campus Ministry

UUA.org/ya-cm/campus/welcome_campusmin.html

Young Adult Network and Campus Ministries

UUA.org/ya-cm/index_js.html

Buildings and Grounds Committee

A buildings and grounds committee typically is concerned with the care and maintenance of the congregation's facilities. It may utilize and coordinate the gardening and handy skills of the congregation and may also be the first line of oversight for outside contractors. Buildings and grounds committees are frequently involved with issues of accessibility and safety. For more information, please go to UUA.org, click Leaders then Leaders' Library and search 'Accessibility.'

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Church Mutual Offers Help Crime-Proofing

UUA.org>Leaders' Library>search "Church Mutual"*

Prevent Electrical Fires with Inspections

UUA.org>Leaders Library>search "Fire Inspections"*

Review the accessibility of your congregation's facilities

UUA.org >Leaders>Leaders' Library> search "Accessibility"*

Leadership Development (Volunteer Development Committee)

The leadership development or volunteer development committee works on a year-round basis to encourage volunteers. Like the nominating committee, with which it is often paired, it sees the membership through the lens of potential leaders. It is also a morale-boosting group. The volunteer development committee can function as a clearinghouse of information on what other

committees do and what kinds of responsibilities are involved. This committee may coordinate the congregation's committee fair as well.

Sometimes the committee provides leadership training on site or coordinates with other congregations for local or regional training. It also provides information about district training opportunities. Members of this committee act as a resource to other committees when they are having difficulties.

An assessment of a congregation's current volunteer practices may reveal a congregation's strengths, the strengths it needs to develop, and obstacles it needs to overcome. Answering the following questions as a committee, board, or wider group can point to areas needing greater focus:

- Do volunteers understand how their work furthers the mission of the congregation?
- Is there a list of all volunteer positions in the congregation, and do people have a good idea of what is expected of them when they accept a volunteer position?
- Are there written descriptions for most of the significant volunteer roles?
- Who is aware of the interests, talents, and availability of new members?
- Have members been invited to volunteer for a task or committee?
- Has the volunteer work been shared by many members rather than by only a few, who do most of the work?
- Is a face-to-face conversation used for asking people to serve in volunteer positions?
- Is everyone who is asked to participate in a volunteer position given an accurate description of how much time and effort the position will take?
- Is there a definite and clear time limit to the responsibility that the person is agreeing to?
- Does your congregation provide leadership training for potential, as well as current, lay leadership?
- Is someone available to support, assist, and encourage volunteers?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Colorado Church Treats Volunteers with Care

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Colorado Church"*

Need More Volunteers? Try the Personal Approach

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Personal Approach"*

Publicity Committee

Publicity committees are charged with getting out the word about the existence, ministries, and activities of the congregation. These committees may use a variety of media: newspaper, radio, or television advertising; signage, including the Wayside Pulpit; and a congregational Web site. Publicity committees often oversee the production of the congregation's newsletter as well.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Congregational Web sites: Our New Front Door

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Congregational Websites"*

Parish Communications Committee.

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Parish Communications"*

Resources

This document covers only the basics of committee work. An excellent resource is available in your district staff. Please contact them for information on a specific topic and to receive suggestions of other congregations to contact who might have good information to share based on their experiences. To contact your district, go to UUA.org/DIST. In addition, The Alban Institute has a number of good resources, at www.alban.org.

Web Resources

InterConnections (a newsletter and resource library)

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Interconnections"*

UU Faith Works

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Faith Works"*

Unitarian Universalist Association and non-Unitarian Universalist Association sponsored Email Lists

UUA.org/lists/

Print Resources

Additional pamphlets on Unitarian Universalism are available through the Unitarian Universalist Association Bookstore, at UUA.org/bookstore.

Belletini, Mark. *Worship in UU Congregations*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1993.

McIntosh, Gary L. *Staff Your Church for Growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000.

Noyce, Gaylord. *Church Meetings That Work*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1994.

101+ Ideas for Membership Growth. A pamphlet available from the Unitarian Universalist Association Office of New Congregation and Growth Resources, Boston, January 2001.

UUA.org >Leaders' Library> search "Growth" *

Phillips, Roy D. Letting Go: Transforming Congregations for Ministry. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1999.

Church of the Larger Fellowship, For Small Groups.

UUA.org/clf/smallgroups.html

Singing the Living Tradition. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1994.

UU Faith Works (formerly the REACH Packet). A serial available twice annually from the Lifespan Faith Development Staff Group, Unitarian Universalist Association, Boston.

UUA Meditation Manual. Boston: Skinner House Books, published annually. Available through the Unitarian Universalist Association Bookstore.

***Important note for searching UUA.org:** All UUA resources mentioned are available in the Leaders section of the web site, in the Leaders' Library. Please use quotes around the title when you search to bring up the resource or item you seek.