

**Overview of UUA Marketing Outreach 1999-2005**  
**April 2006 Board Report**  
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In 1999 the Executive Staff Council completed work on a strategic plan that included the following initiative: *“Develop and test new means for attracting and retaining new members in preparation for a major national campaign for that purpose.”*

Since then, the following regional advertising campaigns have been conducted:

- Kansas City: 2003
- Long Beach: To support GA 2004
- Houston: January - April 2005
- North Texas (Dallas/Ft. Worth): June (pre GA) - August 2005
- New York City: Times Square, holiday season 2005

Campaigns are currently planned in the following markets for 2006:

- Southern California (Orange County, Long Beach and South Bay): Fall 2006
- St. Louis: GA 06 and Fall 2006

A campaign in San Francisco is being considered for 2007, pending fund-raising success.

All the campaigns have the following goals:

1. Generate brand awareness of Unitarian Universalism
2. Increase visitor attendance at local congregations
3. Increase membership
4. Create excitement and pride among Unitarian Universalists in the area

All campaigns have congregational preparedness as a component.

This report summarizes each campaign with results-to-date. Included is a section on “lessons learned”.

### **KANSAS CITY: 2003**

#### **Campaign Highlights:**

**Time: January – May 2003**

**Budget: \$212,600** (\$130,000 for the media buy; the remainder for focus groups, pre-post advertising awareness research, creative materials, etc.)

#### **Media Mix:**

- **Billboard:** Six locations over four months (rotating location after two months) with two billboard locations for an additional month. Total circulation ~ 34 million.
- **TV Advertising:** Two weeks - total of 92 spots and 55 "TV billboards" on Channels ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX Delivering 3,847,000 impressions.
- **Radio:** Ten stations, 1,023 spots and 338 sponsorship "billboards" over a six-week period. 3 Million+ impressions.
- **Print:** The Call and The Globe newspapers - 2 ads each, 2 of them for the Bobby Watson Quintet concert, 2 for UUA President Sinkford event.
- **Tri-fold Brochure:** Metro Kansas City/Lawrence congregation brochure (paid for with PSD Chalice Lighter grant).
- **"Tab" insert:** Kansas City Star (late August - post campaign).

**Public Relations activities to support campaign:** Seven public events were held during the campaign to attract the public to the churches. Events included:

1. Commercial Closet - - video presentation/lecture on advertising portrayals of gay, lesbian and transgender persons.
2. The Miracle of Jazz: Leadership, Virtuosity, Limits - with jazz artist Bobby Watson, his Quintet and social ethicist Dr. Sharon Welch.
3. Empty Bowls - a benefit for Harvester's Community Food Network at SMUUCH.
4. Russian Jazz Pianist, Eldar Djangirov, and his Trio in concert.
5. Wes Jackson - environmentalist, founder of The Land Institute.
6. Rev. Dr. William Schulz, Executive Director, Amnesty USA.
7. Rev. William Sinkford, UUA President.

**Measurable Results:**

**Website hits:** "Visiting from KC area?" site on the uua.org home page received over 9,000 hits. This page linked to further information about Unitarian Universalism and to the Kansas City congregations' web sites.

**Attendance:** Increase in attendance at the four participating congregations was between 10% and 25% (comparing Dec 01-June 02 with Dec 02-June 03) with an average increase of 14% for all four congregations.

**Membership:** New Members: 75 new members joined during the campaign. Acquisition cost per member for that period: \$1,733.

Net membership for the four Kansas City congregations and for the Prairie Star District as reported to the UUA in February of each year, is as follows:

Congregation	2002	2003	% 2002 2003	2004	% 2003 2004	2005	% 2004 2005	2006	% 2005 2006	% 2003 2006
Shawnee Mission	188	187	-.5%	232	24%	250	8%	255	2%	36%
All Souls	390	387	-.7%	400	3%	423	6%	458	8%	18%
Lawrence	137	112	-18%	137	22%	147	7%	144	-2%	29%
Gaia	25	21	-16%	34	62%	44	29%	40	-9%	90%
Total four congregations	740	707	-4%	803	14%	864	8%	897	4%	27%
Prairie Star District	8,000	8,011	.13%	8,472	6%	8,696	3%	8,931	3%	11%

The chart indicates that the district is growing and that the congregations involved in the campaign are growing, and sustaining growth, at a significantly higher rate.

**Ancillary Benefits:**

Rev. Jim Eller, Minister of All Souls Kansas City, was interviewed in February 2006 for an update regarding the long-term impact of the campaign.

Rev. Eller feels strongly that there is a "latency effect" of the advertising campaign. People may not remember the campaign, yet sub-consciously seek out a UU church when in a life transition.

Rev. Eller also feels strongly that the advertising campaign was the impetus for a large systemic change among the congregations - because of the media campaign congregants began to be intentional about growth.

Rev. Eller states, *"I have strongly positive feelings about the UUA ad campaign. Systemic growth is not linear... I could make a case that all of our regional growth can be attributed to the ad campaign. All Souls has added over one hundred members since the ad campaign and we've recently hired a membership coordinator. The area congregations have started a Southern Cluster Outreach ministry which has led to significant growth in Lawrence, Warrensburg, Topeka, and Manhattan; and the starting of a new congregation in Emporia, Kansas. The Wichita congregation has bought land and is building a new church. Lawrence has hired its first minister in forty years. Springfield wants to join the Prairie Star District because of our growth initiative. All this can be said to be the result of the ad campaign."*

#### **LONG BEACH: GA 2004**

In partnership with the GA Planning Committee, the UUA conducted a short marketing campaign (cost: \$35,000) publicizing the "Seeker Service" held the Sunday of GA. During the month of June the UUA ran billboard ads (including a mobile unit), radio spots and print ads. Though there were reports of increased visitors following the campaign, congregational reporting was not detailed enough to determine the impact of this effort.

#### **HOUSTON: January- April 2005**

##### **Campaign Highlights:**

**Time: January through April 2005**

**Budget: \$212,000**

##### **Media Mix:**

- **Billboard:** Two months (January and February) of billboard advertising in three high traffic locations (average drive-by circulation 500,000 daily. Total campaign circulation: 30 million).
- **Direct Mail:** 200,000 households received post-cards, each three times, in late January, February and March. Total mailing – 600,000 pieces.
- **Print Ads:** Eight ¼ page b/w print ads in the Sunday Houston Chronicle and three in the Sunday Galveston Daily News. Approx. 750,000 subscribers, 1.5 million readers. Total impressions: ~ 12 million.
- **Magazine Ads:** Three months of advertising (1/2 page four color ads) in OutSmart, a GLBT special interest magazine, and banner ads on the OutSmart website.
- **Tabloid Insert:** An 8-page insert, with stories about all eight congregations, in the Sunday Chronicle on February 20, 2005. Subscriber list of 750,000 households and a readership of >1.50 Million.
- **Web Banner ads:** Six weeks on the Chronicle News homepage. 38,326 impressions.
- **Directory listing in Chronicle Religion section:** The eight congregations were listed in Houston Chronicle Religion section (complimentary), Saturdays for six weeks.

- **Radio:** 7 week/105 radio announcements on KUHF, the Houston area public radio station. Average listeners ~200,000.
- **Banners:** Large outdoor banners, duplicating visuals of billboards, outside each congregation.
- **Tri-fold Brochure:** 5,000 brochures with detailed information about all the congregations.

**Measurable Results:**

**Background Data:** Year End 2004 - 1,686 members in the eight (8) Houston Area UU Congregations.

**First Time Visitors:** Over 605 first time visitors attended a Unitarian Universalist congregation in the greater Houston area from January – April 2005; 1,174 for all of 2005.

Visitor acquisition costs: First four months - ~\$350; for the 2005 Year - ~\$180.

**2005 New Members:**

- 143 new members joined a Houston UU congregation during the first five months.
- 281 new members joined in 2005.
- New member acquisition costs ranged from: ~ \$750 to ~\$1,500.

The “conversion percentage” of visitors to membership is 24%.

The campaign was donor funded – no contributions were made from the congregations. However, assuming an average \$750 yearly pledge, the pay-back would be between one and two years.

Total new members for 2005 represent 15% of total membership. Not all new members can be attributed to the advertising campaign. Some churches felt there was a direct correlation with the campaign; while others were skeptical about claiming a relational impact of the campaign to membership growth.

**New Members:** The following is a summary of new members and first time visitors during the campaign and end-of-year 2006:

Church	Campaign Jan.- April New Members*	Total New Members 2005	First Time Visitors Jan.- April 2005	Total First Time Visitors 2005
Bay Area	22	34	106	200
Emerson	47	86	125	250
First UU Church	35	71	109	252
Henry David Thoreau	3	19	45**	37**
Northwest Community	10	20	67	129***
Northwoods	17	33***	90	173***
Fellowship of Galveston	4	8***	38	73***
Fellowship of Houston	5	10	25	~ 60
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>1,174</b>

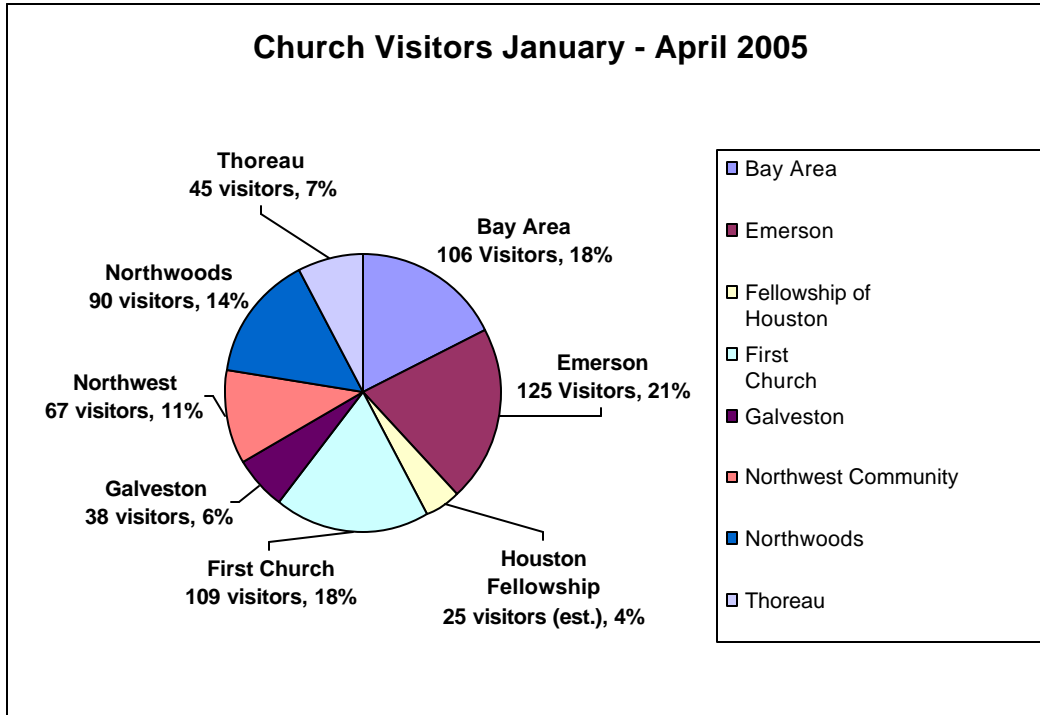
\* New members are not necessarily a result of the campaign; many attended prior to campaign and joined during that period.

\*\*Obvious discrepancy in reporting.

\*\*\* No Data Available: 2005 Total New Members. Assumptions based on average results of the six other congregations that reported - 96% increase in new members first four months v. total first year.

2005 Total First Time Visitors. Assumption based on average results from three congregations (Bay Area, Emerson, First Church) reporting – 93% increase first four months v. total first year.

The breakdown of First Time Visitors, by congregation, during the first four months of the campaign is depicted below:



Net membership figures for the Houston area congregations and for the Southwest District as a whole, as reported to the UUA for certification, are as follows:

Congregation	2003	2004	% 2003 2004	2005	% 2004 2005	2006	% 2005 2006
Bay Area	207	214	3 %	206	-4%	223	8%
Emerson	410	390	-5 %	383	-2%	453	18%
First UU Church	483	504	4%	539	7%	552	2%
Henry David Thoreau	133	133	0 %	142	7%	157	11%
Northwest Community	75	80	7%	78	-2%	88	13%
Northwoods	151	160	6%	183	14%	~200*	9%
Galveston Fellowship	78	77	1%	81	5%	75	-7%
Fellowship of Houston	74	72	3%	74	3%	74	0%
<b>Total: Houston</b>	<b>1,611</b>	<b>1,630</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1,686</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1,822</b>	<b>8%</b>
Southwest District	9,320	9,758	5%	9,872	1%	9,148*	-7%*

\* Northwoods has not reported 2006 figures to the UUA; this estimate is provided by their lay leadership.

The Southwest District has not experienced strong growth. The congregations in Houston have grown at a rate significantly higher than the district.

Churches vary in their membership growth. Bay Area (which expects membership numbers to reach 300 in 2006), Emerson, Thoreau and Northwoods are experiencing above average growth, while the Fellowships are experiencing a decline in membership. The marketing campaign is just one dynamic, of many, influencing congregational vitality.

### **Intangible Results:**

#### **Public Relations Opportunities**

- On February 13, 2005 several UU ministers, along with a dozen other clergy, participated in a Houston area same-sex marriage ceremony for over 50 couples. The event was covered with TV and press interviews. A similar event was held in 2006. Rev. Matt Tittle was interviewed and received good press coverage.
- The Focus on Family “Love Won Out” Conference was on Feb. 20, 2005. Approximately 150 protesters were on hand, many from UU congregations. Rev. Matt Tittle, a UU Minister, was interviewed on radio. In a counter-response to the conference, the UUA ran an ad titled “Imagine a Religion Where All Are Welcome” in both the Galveston and Chronicle papers in February.
- The Houston Chronicle ran an article on church marketing June 12<sup>th</sup>. The UUA marketing campaign was prominently referenced.

### **Anecdotal Comments:**

- Bay Area states that their second highest attendance EVER at the church was Easter Sunday 2005, with 226 folks.
- The Unitarian Fellowship of Houston states “we averaged 2-3 times our regular number of visitors through-out the campaign with a peak of 15 one Sunday...I've also seen folks come in with the insert in their hands as they walked in the door.”
- Northwest Community UU said that “over 50% of the visitors cited the campaign as their reason for coming.”

### **Ancillary Benefits:**

#### **Congregational Transformation**

Rev. Matt Tittle, Minister of Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church, identified the same congregational transformation that Rev. Eller in Kansas City noted. Rev. Tittle states, *“Bay Area is holding a Capital Campaign to raise \$800,000. We have also set our annual canvas goal 33% higher than last year and we will meet that goal. New members are participating in the life of the church. In fact, several are serving on the capital campaign.”*

Elsewhere in the Houston area, Thoreau is breaking ground on a church building project that has struggled for years and they have called a new minister. Emerson cites a “cultural transformation” in the church. Even congregations, such as Northwoods, that stated that they did not feel any impact from the campaign are growing significantly. The congregations are working better together. Matt summarizes, *“UUs are not afraid to evangelize. There is more energy and vibrancy everywhere.”*

## **NORTH TEXAS (DALLAS/FT. WORTH): JUNE (PRE GA) - AUGUST 2005**

### **Campaign Highlights:**

**Time: June – August 2005**

**Budget: \$94,000.**

**UUA funded \$52,000 and NTAUUS (N. Texas Association of UU Societies) funded \$42,000**

### **Media Mix:**

- **Billboard:** Three billboards in June with a snipe inviting folks to our GA service on Sunday, June 26
- **Radio:** Four weeks. General Service Announcement spots on KERA, public radio, and commercial spots on KOAI (jazz). .
- **Direct Mail:** 60,000 households received two direct mail pieces: June (pre-GA) and mid-August in preparation for back-to-church/school. Primary congregations served: First Jefferson, Pathways, Horizon, and Plano.
- **Telemarketing:** 60,000 households (same household list as direct mail) called in June. New residents campaign – ~30,000 households called October/November.
- **Tabloid Insert:** 110,00 4-page tabloid inserts in August 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday newspapers serving all 13 congregations.
- **Newspaper Ad:** ¼ page b/w ad in the Fort Worth Star Telegram June 19, 2005 promoting Seeker Sunday.
- **Tri-fold brochure** listing all the N. Texas congregations were printed and distributed.

### **Measurable Results:**

Of the thirteen congregations participating in the campaign only a few congregations submitted results. Results are as follows (these numbers, however, may not be consistent with reported results to the UUA):

- Community UU Church of Plano experienced a 6% (81 versus 77) increase in first time visitors from June – September 2004 versus June-September 2005. However, total visitors and new members reported for the year 2005 were lower than 2004. The information is as follows:
  - First Time Visitors 2004: 106
  - First Time Visitors 2005: 60 (Community UU Church in Plano states, “we had many more first time visitors but they did not fill out our forms”).
  - New Members 2004: 18
  - New Members 2005: 14
- Pathways had 6 first time visitors in August 2005. Two cited the advertising as their reason for visiting, four cited friend or relative.
- First Unitarian Church of Dallas had 624 “identified visitors” in 2005 versus 605 in 2004, a 3% increase; and 123 new members in 2005 versus 115 in 2004, a 7% increase.
- Red River – 5 new members in August-September in this 44 member congregation
- Denton: Lots of new faces, a definite increase in guests. Five (5) new members since mid-August and 3 more “in the pipeline”.

- Horizon – There appeared to be a noticeable increase in guests during the second week in June and continuing into September. However, total first time visitor counts for June-September 2005 were actually less than the same period 2004 – 82 first time visitors (2005) versus 82 (2004). Fifteen (15) new members joined in August- September 2005.

**Net Membership results, as reported to the UUA:**

Net membership figures for the thirteen North Texas congregations as reported to the UUA for certification are as follows:

<b>Congregation</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>% 2003 2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>% 2004 2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>% 2005 2006</b>
Arlington	35	38	9%	31	-18%	35	<b>13%</b>
Horizon	315	317	0.6%	292	-8%	293	<b>0.3%</b>
First Dallas	841	916	9%	967	5%	1008	<b>4%</b>
Oak Cliff	54	71	31%	76	7%	87	<b>14%</b>
Denton Fellowship	102	110	8%	93	-15%	94	<b>1%</b>
Red River	38	44	16%	47	7%	52	<b>10%</b>
First Jefferson	179	190	6%	195	3%	193	<b>-1%</b>
Westside	82	95	16%	93	-2%	88	<b>-5%</b>
Pleasant Valley	15	15	0	15	0	15	<b>0</b>
Longview	27	32	19%	32	0	37	<b>16%</b>
Community- Plano	160	155	-3%	146	-6%	151	<b>3%</b>
Tyler Fellowship	25	33	32%	41	24%	31	<b>-24%</b>
Pathways*	NA	NA		NA		NA	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,873</b>	<b>2,016</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>2,028</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>2,084</b>	<b>3%</b>
Southwest District	9,320	9,758	5%	9,872	1%	9,148*	-7%

\*Pathways is not a member congregation, therefore, they are not part of the UUA certification reporting.

The following Pathways' numbers are from "Report of the Pathways Review Panel- March 2006":

December 2004: 36 adult members  
 May 2005: 60 adult members  
 September 2005: 71 adult members  
 January 2006: 62 adult members

The numbers do not indicate a strong positive correlation of the campaign to results. However, the 13 congregations did experience a growth rate higher than the district as a whole.

The congregations (Horizon, First Jefferson, Pathways and Plano) that were targeted with the direct mail and Sunday insert did not see significant net membership. Pathways did see a significant increase in new members from May – September but other factors of a new church start-up may have contributed to that growth.

## **Telemarketing:**

This campaign tested telemarketing as a means of outreach. This campaign was different in several ways to a traditional telemarketing campaign. Calls were automated, with a pre-recorded message which invited the listener to “opt-in” to talk. UU volunteers, conversant about our faith and knowledgeable about our local church environments, were available to receive the calls.

Telemarketing results, like direct mail, are normally between ½ - 3%.

### ***June Campaign:***

The 60,000 families on the direct mail list were called. The calls were to be made after the June mailing. Unfortunately, the direct mail, which was bulk rate, reached households ~7+ days later than anticipated. The phone calls preceded the mail, lessening the telemarketing impact.

The pre-recorded message was an invitation to attend the Seekers Service at GA and/or a local congregation.

#### **Stats:**

- 80,000 automated dials (several attempts)
- 40,000 (50%) received a recorded message on their answering machine
- 20,000 were answered by a person (25% of total dials)
- 400 chose to speak to a volunteer
- 38 expressed interest in the UU message

Only 2% (versus a projected forecast of 15%) of the 20,000 chose to “press 1” to speak to a volunteer. The project model had estimated that 25% of those would be interested in more information; results were 7%. The end result was that ~30 respondents expressed interest in the UU message.

Total Project Cost of Telemarketing: \$21,000 (Telephone service cost \$18,000 and list cost \$3,000). Cost per lead: \$677.

High “no response” rates and some negative comments were demoralizing to the volunteers.

While the results were disappointing, 60,000 families did hear a message from Rev. Laurel Hallman about Unitarian Universalism. In many ways the telemarketing message served as a commercial delivered into a family's home.

### ***Fall: New Homeowners Campaign:***

Telemarketing was tested again in the fall. Several improvements were made to the process including 1) not calling households on the “do not call list” (non-profits, by law, are exempt from the do-not-call regulations, but the “do not call list” was honored), 2) having a response mechanism for listeners to request they be taken off the list (an option not used in the prior campaign which resulted in the volunteers having to handle disgruntled respondents) and 3) a softer “new neighbor” welcoming message versus an advertising message.

#### **Stats:**

- 21,928 automated dials (after pre-test of 8,000 names)
- 7,554 received a recorded message on the answering machine (34% of the dials)
- 5,088 – live answers (23% of dials)
- 143 pressed 1 to speak to a person (2.81% of the live answers)

Thirty-two (32) showed a positive level of interest after the conversation, representing 22% of the people who did talk to a volunteer and 0.63% of those who answered the phone live.

Total project cost \$5,818. (Telephone service cost \$2,528 and the list cost \$3,289). Cost per lead \$182.

The response rate was higher than the first telemarketing effort, yet still lower than projected. The prospects were not strong leads. Again, however, the fact that 21,000 households heard a message about Unitarian Universalism was perceived as a positive outcome.

#### **Anecdotal Comments:**

Laurel Hallman, Sr. Minister at First Unitarian Dallas stated, "I frankly don't know about the campaign's success across the Metroplex. First Dallas has been growing significantly, but it has been hard to know if it was from the actual marketing, or the secondary effects of people seeing 'their church' publicized."

Laurel commented about "evangelizing" in her Church of the Larger Fellowship sermon in summer 2005. In her sermon she described her disappointment in the telemarketing campaign results but went on to say, "*I had an ah-ha moment late last week, when I got an e-mail from a woman in my congregation. It seems her boss and a few of the other employees were standing around, and her boss said, 'I got a phone call from a woman Unitarian Minister inviting me to a service. But I wouldn't go because that's just a front for the Democratic Party.' My friend told him that I was her minister. But she said, 'I didn't say too much more.'*

*Aha! I thought. She had come out. Not a lot. But enough. She had come out as a Unitarian Universalist.*

*It was at that moment I realized that we had focused on the really quite small amount of failed contacts. What about the other 50,000+ calls? What about the ones who heard our message... maybe didn't think much about it, but heard our name? Or what about the—let's say for guessing—25,000 who thought 'Hmmm.'*

*And not only that. What about all those Unitarian Universalists who have 'come out' because of the calls? By the end of the week, I was excited about what we did. It's time we stopped hiding. It's time we become evangelical."*

#### **NEW YORK CITY: TIMES SQUARE**

##### **Highlights:**

**Time: Holiday Season 2005**

**Budget: \$60,000**

**Media: 30 second commercial spots on NBC/Panasonic 1,200 sq. ft. Astrovision Screen**

- Commercials ran 24 days, eight times a day. Schedule: November 14- 27<sup>th</sup> and December 23- January 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Approximately 1.5 million people traveled through Times Square each day of the campaign, with 2.5 million visitors traveling through Times Square during the Thanksgiving Day parade (which was broadcast by NBC) and 750,000 revelers

celebrating in Times Square on New Year's Eve. Over 36 million visitors had the opportunity to see the message.

- The UUA commercial was created by a production company (Left Of Centre Productions) sub-contracted by the media buying company, O'hsin Technology, using the visuals from the Houston UU campaign. The message shared important values of our faith in simply worded phrases and accompanying photos.
- The commercial directed seekers to the UUA website. The home page of the UUA website had a link, titled "*Did You Meet Us in Times Square?*" That link shared general information about Unitarian Universalism as well as a link to congregations in the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

### **Congregational Preparedness**

The three congregations in Manhattan were contacted – All Souls (1,300+ members), Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist (340 members) and Fourth Universalist Society (180 members) - along with the NY Metro District staff.

The District (serving 51 congregations) helped support the campaign by putting information on the district website (with the commercial showcased as entry to the site) along with a special edition of the metro e-newsletter. One hundred and fifty (150) leaders of the twelve Long Island congregations were notified via an active blog. A Q&A link was created to stimulate dialogue about marketing and outreach.

All congregations in the greater NYC area were asked to be mindful of hospitality and to measure results. Articles on the websites included UUA resources to support the campaign, specifically in the areas of hospitality and membership.

### **Measurable Results:**

#### **Website "hits"**

Over 4,000 hits were registered to the UUA link "*Did You Meet Us in Times Square?*" during the Thanksgiving week commercial "flight".

By January 2, 2006 (close of the campaign) the UUA registered 5,362 hits to the Times Square page. As of March 15, 2006 there were over 7,000 hits to the page.

The Times Square visual link was taken off the UUA home page during the Christmas week in deference to a holiday message of thanks and generosity. A smaller link remained on the right side bar. This may have influenced the decline in registered hits.

Hits to the UUA Times Square link do not tell the whole story. It may be that campaign respondents visited the UUA.org home page and did not go to the Times Square link. Hits to the UUA home page were not monitored during the campaign. Because the UUA site is used so frequently by members, any attempt to measure results of the campaign by monitoring home page volume would be misleading.

Conversely, not all respondents were "visitors". Many were UUs – their interest certainly supported an objective of creating pride among Unitarian Universalists.

### **Congregational Response: New visitors, increase attendance, new members**

The four congregations in New York City did not provide data. All Souls stated that they had "slightly more" new visitors (estimated: 24) than for the same period a year prior. They did not attribute this increase to the campaign but to other factors, such as their heavily attended All Souls at Sundown Jazz series.

## Press

The UUA Office of Public Witness and Information submitted information to the press. The Religious News Service picked up the information, expanded it and released a story over their wire service on December 9<sup>th</sup> titled “*Churches Advertise in Bright Lights of Times Square*” (see addendum). The story was covered in the following publications:

- Cleveland Plain Dealer (Ohio’s largest daily newspaper with daily readership of 875,000) and on their website, Cleveland.com on December 17<sup>th</sup>
- Arkansas Democrat Gazette (readership of over 150,000) and the NWAnews.com (website affiliate) on December 17<sup>th</sup>
- Benny Hinn Ministries website: Section - “Religion in the News”

## Unitarian Universalist Communication

- An article appeared on the UUA website home page for approximately two weeks in December
- **UUWorld.org** covered the story.
- An announcement was posted on several UUA list serves including:
  - Pr-I
  - UU-leaders
  - 550-plus (large congregations)
- The President’s Council was notified at the October Annual Meeting.
- The Houston network, congregations, ministers, models and donors were all notified of the campaign.
- New York District congregations were contacted via the website, e-newsletter and blogs.

## Blogs

Over 19 blogs had content regarding the campaign. These blogs generated conversations among Unitarian Universalists about evangelizing and marketing. This “buzz” is important to generating camaraderie, pride and focused intentionality around outreach.

## Ancillary Results:

Several congregations have requested, and are using, the commercial - primarily on their websites. The commercial is available to any congregation for use.

The congregations in the Metro District are engaging in serious conversations about marketing. Valerie Holton has been invited to present an all-day Marketing Workshop on April 1, 2006 at the District’s Annual President’s Meeting.

The campaign did generate pride among Unitarian Universalists in the metro district. The following is a comment received from congregants in the New York Metro District in response to an e-mail query about the campaign.

*“I felt more pride in myself and was excited about the ad being in Times Square, particularly on Dec. 31. Our membership committee was also very excited about the ad and is using the postcards as an outreach tool to new visitors and to people moving into the Ridgewood area”.*

The UUA received a DVD of the commercial during the Thanksgiving Day parade. The tape can be used in many ways, such as at the opening ceremonies for GA or as a fund-raising tool.

## **LESSONS LEARNED: Requirements for Continuous Improvement**

### **Measurement of Results:**

More foresight must be given to measuring response rates. Each campaign suffered from:

- 1) "Definitional" inconsistency. Congregations define members and membership, first time visitors, returning visitors, attendance, etc. very differently, making comparative analysis impossible.
- 2) Lack of measurements. Getting congregations to provide data is extremely difficult. Repeated requests were made with little response.

More response mechanisms (special websites addresses, promotional giveaways, etc.) should be integrated into the campaigns to measure advertising effectiveness.

### **Strategic Marketing:**

Campaigns that have advanced planning and local area involvement appear to have more long term impact than those that are "opportunistic" or tactical (Times Square & GA campaigns).

### **Managing Expectations:**

Ascertaining whether "advertising works" is problematic. Some goals, such as brand awareness, are difficult to measure. The UUA does not have comparative data (either internally or from other religious organizations) to evaluate visitor and member acquisition costs. What is known is that name awareness/perception of Unitarian Universalism is low and that membership growth is modest and declining as a percentage of the U.S. population. Advertising is one of many legitimate methods of outreach.

### **Correlation Between Enthusiasm for Campaign and Results:**

There is a strong correlation between a congregation's enthusiasm for a campaign and positive campaign results. The Minister plays a critical role in the campaign's success. This strong correlation would imply that the campaign is a catalyst, but not the only factor, in church growth.

### **Integrated Marketing:**

Integrated marketing, specifically a web presence on targeted sites that in turn drive visitors to Unitarian Universalism, is an important part of the marketing mix that needs to be enhanced. An integrated marketing plan is currently being developed.

## CLOSING STATEMENT:

***Possibly the most important outcome of a marketing campaign is the cultural transformation that occurs.***

Revs. Eller, Tittle and Hallman, as well as the folks at Emerson Church (Houston) and New York City, all commented on how the marketing campaign changes the way that Unitarian Universalists view themselves in the world. All observed that the advertising campaigns change the congregations *systemically*.

This dramatic change is the premise of Malcom Gladwell's book [The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference](#). An example in the book is the story of how Rudy Giuliani reduced crime in New York City not by hiring more police, but by beautifying the neighborhoods and repairing the broken windows. When residents felt pride in their communities, crime was reduced.

*The proposition of [The Tipping Point](#) is that a single, minor action, carefully conceived and adeptly enacted, can produce major consequences for individuals and organizations.*

A marketing campaign can serve as a tipping point. When we focus intentionally on promoting and evangelizing our faith, individual UUs and entire congregations instinctively view growth and outreach more positively. There is a new vitality. A culture change occurs. Marketing can become the catalyst for the revitalization of our congregations and our faith.

## Churches Advertise in Bright Lights of Times Square

By Nicole LaRosa



**Religion News Service, NEW YORK** -- Giant TV screens in Times Square barrage shoppers with hundreds of advertisements. Advertisements like: Drink Diet Pepsi.

Come to church? This holiday season, some religious groups are broadcasting their messages to the 1.5 million people who pass through Times Square each day in the bustling "crossroads of the world."

The dazzlingly bright ads flash 60 feet above the crowds on the NBC/Panasonic Astrovision screen, a 30-by-40-foot video screen at One Times Square, the building famed for the New Year's Eve ball drop.

Slick, clever commercials feature slogans like "Everybody matters" and "Where to go when you don't know where to go," hoping to reach "seekers" -- church-speak for those looking for a spiritual home.

"It's to let folks know that if they are searching, we are there," said Tracey Robinson-Harris, spokesperson for the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Spots for the self-described "liberal and creedless" denomination ran eight times a day during Thanksgiving week and will repeat that schedule from Dec. 23 to Jan. 1. "Imagine a religion where people with different beliefs worship as one faith," read the words on the screen, while an ethnically diverse group of people talk and laugh together.

"We wanted to get our name and a very simple expression about our values out," said Robinson-Harris. The 220,000-member UUA -- known for attracting converts looking for less-structured worship -- raised the \$60,000 for the campaign from donors.

The United Church of Christ, whose ads that feature gay couples were deemed "too controversial" by the major television networks, ran a similar ad on the Astrovision screen in November.

Using the slogan "Open Hearts, Open Doors, Open Minds," the 8.2 million-member United Methodist Church also hopes to catch the attention of seekers. "They are the target audience," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, head of the church's communications agency, which spent \$1.89 million of the church's annual \$500 million budget on its holiday Astrovision and cable TV ads.

When a Methodist court ruled last October that pastors can deny membership to gays and lesbians, critics called on the church to reject the four-year-old slogan. But Hollon and other church officials denounced the ruling, and said keeping the motto was important. "Christ rejected no one," he said in a memo. "Neither can we."

The Methodist Astrovision ad encourages selfless giving by depicting a woman depositing boxes wrapped with a blue ribbon in a park, on a front porch and with a homeless person.

"There's no commercial pay-off at the end," said Hollon.

The expensive ads are worth church dollars, he said, because "they offer an alternative way to see the world and your place in it, and that's a valuable form of ministry."

First-time attendance in 160 Methodist test churches has grown by 19 percent since the denomination began its targeted ads in 2001, said Hollon. When Reuters cited a policy of refusing all religious advertising for its Times Square video screen in 2003, the church protested. Reuters later changed its policy and allowed the ads.

But these churches can't take all the credit for the idea to advertise in Times Square this year. Marketers of the NBC/Panasonic Astrovision billboard specifically targeted religious groups and nonprofits, offering discounts of up to 20 percent.

"We suggested it to NBC, and they were amenable," said Ron Walker, CEO of O'hsin Technology, a Toronto-based company with exclusive rights to sell the ad spots for the holiday season.

Walker said he marketed to churches because he felt it was "the right thing to do" during the holiday season.

"The whole theory of Thanksgiving is based on thanking God, or the universe or the spirit," said Walker, who is Baptist. The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, with its extra 2.5 million spectators and 44 million television viewers according to Macy's, was a particularly appropriate time for the ads to run, he said. "It's a family-oriented type of event."

The holidays also provide an opportunity to reach those facing depression, increased temptation to drink and dysfunctional family woes, said Steve Watters, a spokesperson for the conservative Christian group Focus on the Family. The group advertised its Troubledwith.com advice Web site on the Astrovision screen after O'hsin called with "a pretty good offer."

"Research has shown that at a time of change, challenge or crisis that people are more open to a new worldview," Watters said.

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