

**REPORT TO THE UUA BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FROM THE
DISTRICT SERVICES STAFF GROUP
January, 2007**

OVERALL DISTRICT STAFF UPDATES

- The annual BCM (Big Complex Meeting) of the entire district staff took place in New Orleans, Louisiana this year. The desire in meeting in New Orleans was to 1) support the local economy 2) observe firsthand the devastation that occurred in the Gulf Coast region and 3) identify ways to share our learning's within individual districts and ensure resources continue to be directed towards the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast area.
- During BCM we discussed the three 2007 Breakthrough Congregations:
 - First Unitarian Portland, Portland, Oregon - Growth from 819 to 1102 (35%) in six years.
 - All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church - Kansas City, Missouri - Growth from 326 to 458 (40%) in six years.
 - Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship, Carbondale, Illinois - Growth from 112 to 177 (58%) in six years.

The fourth congregation is still being considered and the UUAs Growth Team will decide in January which small congregation will be identified as Breakthrough. As in previous years, Breakthrough Congregations will have the opportunity to share steps they've taken to increase their size numerically and embrace the living out of their missions.

- We discussed the upcoming lay leadership training that will occur at UU University in Portland. Gil Rendle of the Alban Institute will be the keynote speaker. Workshop tracks will include "Fostering Our Generosity", "Growing Our Faith", and "Sharing Our Leadership".

- There is significant excitement about the conversations taking place around creating lay theological education for members of UU congregations.
- The district staff and the district presidents Association has supported a move whereby all benefit costs for all co-employed staff members will be shared as a percent of total payroll. This is significant not only because it streamlines the administrative effort involved in sharing costs for co-employed staff, but far more importantly because it illustrates the willingness for districts to work together in a collaborative way and more fairly share the costs of serving our congregations.
- Feedback from the district staff about the new media resources provided to lay leaders was extremely positive. These resources include the Breakthrough Congregations 2006 DVD, the "Drive Time Essays: "The Best of InterConnections" CD, and the "Ideas for Growth" DVD created and produced by the Jefferson Unitarian Church in Golden Colorado.
- District staff members were encouraged to create covenants of relationships with their local UUMA and/or LREDA chapters. These covenants will address the ways in which staff members and ministers will be in relationship with one another while performing their respective ministries for our larger faith.

UPDATES FROM THE DISTRICTS:

PACIFIC CENTRAL DISTRICT

The Pacific Central District is proud to have designated our fall Chalice Lighter Call to the congregations of the Gulf Coast. Although the District has raised money for this twice before, we know that the work is far from done, and that our help is still very much needed. Dedicated UUs from all around the PCD are sending in their checks in record numbers, many for ten times their usual amounts!

We held an extraordinary fall social justice conference, Moral Beacon Day,

with a fantastic keynote address presented by Dr. Charlie Clements, and workshops presented by the Washington Advocacy Office, the UU Ministry for the Earth, and our own, wonderful, UU Legislative Ministry of CA. The event also featured workshops on marriage equality, responding to Darfur, "The Great Turning," a street retreat lead by the Faithful Fools Ministry, and much more.

We are well into our fund raising work in support of the next major marketing campaign, this one for the greater San Francisco Bay Area. To date we have raised over \$136k, thanks to the amazing staff of the Stewardship and Development department. We've changed the previous model which limited the fund raising to the "President's Roundtable," and are inviting all the members and friends of the congregations to participate in this campaign. This meant that 17 congregations had to decide to share these rosters with the UUA! And we are especially proud of our PCD Board of Directors who voted to fully participate themselves, regardless of whether their individual congregations would be a part of this campaign! We believe they are the first District board in the country to show this level of leadership.

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY DISTRICT

The Joseph Priestley District had 110 people from 35 congregations attend the second Racial Justice Conference in October.

The district is once again offering *Growth for Small Congregations* led by the District Staff in January at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Mill Creek, Newark, DE.

The sixth annual Music and Worship Arts Festival will take place at River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD, on the last weekend in February.

Young adults will be having antiracism training in January and the first JPD YACM grant has been awarded to First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia. A day long workshop on volunteer recruitment will be held in February.

For the fourth year the district is offering Healthy Congregations Workshops for congregational teams to learn about emotional systems and leadership.

The youth are being formed into clusters around the district to create new programming for middle and high school youth.

CENTRAL MIDWEST DISTRICT

A conference entitled "Right Relations in Congregational Life" addressing all aspects of creating safe congregation policies and practices will take place on February 24, 2007 at the Universalist Unitarian Church of Peoria, IL.

REALL - the second annual Religious Education and Lifelong Learning Conference - for professional and lay religious education leaders. Sally Patton will be a featured presenter on Saturday, and we will use Open Space Technology to explore interests and needs around building and strengthening multigenerational faith communities. March 23-24, First Unitarian Society in Milwaukee, WI

FLORIDA DISTRICT

The District Leadership Council was delighted by the congregational response to its November leadership training program. District Executive Kenn Hurto and Acting Lifespan Program Consultant Connie Goodbread will host a second round of training in January.

MASSACHUSETTS BAY DISTRICT

Liz Strong is conducting a series of conversations with Religious Educators about their role in their communities and their faith development. The results are very moving and will be shared at a workshop at GA.

The District has a ministerial intern, Kate Wilkinson, who is conducting a survey of all social action efforts in our district toward the desire to consolidate activities and share resources.

HEARTLAND DISTRICT

This fall, the Heartland has been experimenting with new (to us) training modalities. Rather than having weekend long workshops that we expect others to travel to, we have created a "road show" with three presenters doing day-long training, with the trainers moving around to various parts of the District. The reception to this year's offerings (stewardship, religious education issues, and membership and lay leader development) has been terrific—people appreciate not only the information, but the reduced travel and the ability to grab day-long training when their calendars would not allow them to get away for a weekend.

We've also experienced great success with our "Raising the Roof" conference. We had 82 people register for this training by Alice Mann—and by holding it in our District, we were able to offer this quality training at a fraction of the price it would cost to take it directly from the Alban Institute. Ninety-four percent of those who completed the survey said that this training was well worth their time and money.

Which brings us to the other recent innovation—the creation of on-line surveys for evaluation of all training events. By using the web-based Survey Monkey tool, we are able to create evaluations that can be easily analyzed to "fine tune" future events. This move to on-line work also includes the move this fall to e-mail based newsletters to all members of the District to keep them apprised of what's going on in a more timely fashion, while reducing production costs of mailed newsletters and saving a few more trees.

SOUTHWESTERN CONFERENCE

Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge, LA hosted the SWUUC Fall Leadership Conference with the theme "What Works" and the Rev. Michael Schuler as keynote speaker. This was the highest attended leadership conference in several years and was held only a few weeks after an also well-supported leadership conference entitled "Lessons in Liberal Lay Leadership" hosted by Community UU Church of Plano, TX. This Dallas/Fort Worth conference was the brainchild of Dwight Brown Leadership Experience graduate Celeste Kennedy who wanted to make a taste of DBLE more widely accessible.

At the conclusion of the Big Complex meeting, New Orleans and Baton Rouge congregations as well as their Mississippi Gulf Coast neighbors enjoyed worship and religious education programming provided by District Staff on their final day in New Orleans.

MOUNTAIN DESERT DISTRICT

MDD is moving into the next stage of its restructuring. With a solid governance structure including a policy board and an active council of volunteers we are developing a proactive schedule of conferences across the district. In September the Four Corners Cluster continued its consideration of the MDD Small Congregation Strategy while exploring the deep connection between excellence in worship and membership growth and retention. Two Stewardship Conferences were offered: one for western congregations and another for northern congregations. All of the district Large Churches gathered at First Unitarian Church in Albuquerque to hear the Rev. Michael Schuller and share resources for large and growing congregations. We are looking forward to the annual Raising the Roof Conference in January with a focus on Emerging and Small Congregations. An amazing local faculty has offered their expertise in service to our small congregations. These conferences have been well received and are rapidly gaining acceptance among congregations.

MDD was surprised to be among the districts invited to participate in the deeper survey with the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee and we have learned a lot about the many large and small events and shifts in perception that have occurred in the district during the last 10 years. The congregations in MDD have given considerable effective attention to the interlocking network of oppressions that are prevalent in our part of the country. We will use this new data as a baseline to re-invigorate district programs supporting Unitarian Universalist work for justice and healing in the mountain west.

BALLOU CHANNING DISTRICT

The Ballou Channing District is launching in November a Mystery Visitor Program to assist congregations assess their guest/visitor welcome and follow-up programs. Congregations will enroll in the program and will be paired by district staff. The process will be for two representatives to visit their paired partner congregation between January and March and complete a report that will be sent to the membership committee, minister and president through the district office. Reports will be confidential shared only with the paired partner.

The BCD Board of Directors held the 2nd Annual Minister-Board Conversation in October. This is a meeting to give ministers and board an opportunity to hear from each other about congregation and ministers needs, efficacy of district services, district finances and other topics of mutual interest. The District President and UUMA Chapter President co-facilitated the conversation.