

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

**Multiple District Activities**

Twelve ministers from twelve fast growing Unitarian Universalist congregations representing seven districts gathered in Louisville, Kentucky for 2 1/2 days to discuss the ministries of their congregations. Among the questions that the ministers were asked to share reflections upon were: "What is the saving message of your congregation?" "How does your congregation help people move inward and outward on their spiritual journey, and how does this relate to congregational growth?" What institutional, organizational, and practical nuts and bolts need to exist in order for a congregation to grow and keep growing? "What are the obstacles or roadblocks to growth?"

Professional videographers recorded the entire event while the UUAs Growth Team members and others sat on the outside of a double circle and listened. A DVD capturing the key learning's will be widely available in the spring.

Ministers participating in the growth consultation included Michael Schuler, First Unitarian Society of Madison, WI; Marilyn Sewell, First Unitarian Church of Portland, OR; Peter Morales, Jefferson Unitarian Church, Golden, Colorado; Christine Robinson, First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque, NM; Rob Hardy's, All Souls Unitarian Church, Washington, DC; Victoria Safford, White Bear UU Church, Mahtomedi, Minnesota; Liz Lerner, UU Church of Silver Spring, Maryland; Thom Belote, Shawnee Mission UU Church, Overland Park, KS; Helen Carroll, UU Fellowship of San Luis Obispo County, CA; Kendra Ford, First UU Society of Exeter, NH; John Crestwell, Davies Memorial UU Church, Maryland; Ken Beldon, Wellsprings, Chester County, MD.

**OTHER EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES OCCURING WITHIN DISTRICTS**

**Thomas Jefferson District**

- Leaders throughout the district can now participate in leadership training offered via web conferences. TJD staff will be offering a monthly 90 minute web seminar on topics including Appreciative Inquiry, Building Multi-racial, Multi-cultural congregations, Models of Governance, Faith Development, and other topics of interest to congregational leaders. The first web conference, offered in November, 2007, was attended by fifteen people representing nine congregations.
- District Executive, Annette Marquis, visited a new satellite congregation of Tennessee Valley UU Church. This one-year old satellite, based in Marysville, just south of Knoxville, is averaging over 75 people on a Sunday morning (with a Sunday in August topping over 200!) and has an active RE and youth program. The congregation meets twice a month on Sundays for a social justice project or a coffee klatch. We are watching this model of starting a new congregation closely and are working with them to nurture it into healthy sustainability.
- Eight-seven members representing approximately 10 congregations in the southern cluster of the TJ District (Georgia and South Carolina) came together in November, 2007, for a two-day workshop put on by the ministers in the cluster on "articulating our faith". This is the first time these congregations have met together and already they are making plans for subsequent events.

### **Pacific Central District**

- The Pacific Central District held a very successful fall conference, our annual Leadership Development Day, which offers day-long workshops, allowing time for practice sessions and coaching for good skill development. This year's workshops included "Congregational Polity," "Radical Hospitality," "RE Teacher Training - Tips and Techniques," "The Voices for Healthcare Project," and a workshop of the Seven Principles for the work of the Commission on Appraisal. We had over 125 people attend, representing 27 congregations.

- The PCD would like to express our appreciation to Mark Steinwinter who helped us install and learn the **Persony** software technology. We used this recently to work with the leaders of our Honolulu congregation, doing an assessment of congregational health and vitality.
- The PCDs next large conference will be our January Growth Conference with Larry Peers. This is the second year we will do this as a joint effort with our UUMA Chapter. Our ministers will work with Larry for two day, and then teams of lay leaders will come in for the third day, to explore Larry's model of organizational systems and how they support the membership journey.

**News from the NRG Co-op: (regional group consisting of: Ohio-Meadville, Metro NY, Joseph Priestly, St. Lawrence Districts)**

- All four Districts now have at least part time Youth Consultants and Young Adult and Campus Ministry Consultants, working within the Districts and cooperatively as a regional group.
- UULTI (the four-district leadership institute that debuted in 2007) will be back again in the summer of 2008.
- A proposal is being considered to cooperatively share a Growth Consultant across the region;  $\frac{3}{4}$  time for JPD and  $\frac{1}{4}$  time for the other three districts, beginning in July 2008, funded by the Districts in cooperation with Congregational Services.

**Metro NY District**

- Andrea Lerner has been named District Executive for Metro NY.
- President's Roundtable - Shared Leadership: Exploring Effective Minister/President Partnerships - October 20, 2007 - presented by two Minister/President teams, modeling ways to develop intentional relationships of trust.
- **LILI** - Long Island Leadership Institute has had their first two meetings - First year experimental program developed by Long Island congregational leadership with District Support. Six Saturdays throughout the year - perhaps a model to explore in other clusters or as a district based program.

- Exciting workshops planned for this winter and spring include:
  - Big Ideas for Small Congregations with Jane Dwinell - January 26
  - Beyond Fundraising with Wayne Clark - February 16
  - President's Roundtable - Counting on Health: Exploring Useful Measures of Congregational Health - Feb 23 2008 -
  - Partners for Sacred Places Workshop - with architect's tour of Fourth Universalist in Manhattan - March 15 (to encourage congregations to sign up to participate in New Dollars/ New Partners program <http://www.sacredplaces.org/training.htm> )
  - Caring Congregations with Barbara Myers (Supporting those with mental health challenges) - March 28-30
  - MNY Annual Meeting - All co-employed staff from the other three districts in the NRG Co-op will come to MNY annual meeting to present workshops - May 1-2

### **Mid-South District**

- This fall Mid-South began offering monthly 'Dispatches from Mid-South District' for publication in congregation newsletters. A different district staff or board-level leader authors the short 'dispatch' each month. The new initiative hopes to better connect the 'people in the pews' with the district, the Association, and neighboring congregations.
- The Alabama-Florida Panhandle Clergy Cluster has facilitated a new covenant for sabbatical support. Although the initiative came from the ministers, the agreement was voted by the congregation boards, so that it is congregations (not ministers) who are in covenant. Triggered by an upcoming sabbatical, the ministers asked each of their congregations to agree to share their minister once with any congregation in the cluster whose minister was on sabbatical (at no charge). Realizing that they all stood to benefit, all the boards agreed. The covenant will be implemented for the first time this spring.
- The 18-month old cluster of the six Unitarian Universalist Congregations in Mississippi has a new steering committee and, in

January, will have a stewardship workshop entitled "The Mouse That Roared: Small Congregations Raising Money to Support Their Missions." The cluster, born of needs after Hurricane Katrina, is now a vital connection for the Mississippi congregations and will offer more workshops in the spring and summer.

- Testing together the new Building the World We Dream About curriculum has forged a unique partnership between two Atlanta congregations -- the First Existentialist Congregation and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta. First Existentialist is a fifty year-old 'federated' congregation (it reports a dozen members as UU while another fifty are existentialist) while UUCA is the largest UU congregation in the area (+/-700 members). Volunteers from the two congregations, whose facilities are only a few miles apart, have created a team which will test the new UUA curriculum over the coming year.

### **Clara Barton District**

- Clara Barton District is enthusiastically developing the Growth Pilot Project, CBD Here We Grow. Our first training session was high energy, high commitment, high learning, and high team building for our 32 participants. Mentors have had their own training and continue to be a good support to each other as they encourage their congregations. A cluster meeting for the congregations is scheduled in January.
- Chalice Lighters program development and ambassador training, Radical Hospitality Training, and Stewardship Training are all drawing many congregations into action.
- "Ministry Matters: Strengthening Lay and Professional Leadership," our inter-district fall conference, was an excellent leadership development event and drew enthusiastic participation.
- In the Clara Barton District, we are gathering information pertinent to the Religious Education ministry in each of our member congregations through a comprehensive survey to religious educators. We are hoping that this will provide statistical assessment data around Lifespan Faith Development in the district. The survey includes

questions about content, curricula, staff team relationships, leadership development, support, and program structure.

### **Southwestern UU Conference**

- Inspired by the format of last summer's UU Leadership Team Institute, five intensive tracks related to the theme "Doors Open Wide" were offered at the SWUUC Fall Leadership Conference in November. To create a multi-generational and multi-disciplinary community, the conference brought together not only ministers and lay congregational leaders but also teens, religious educators, and youth advisors with all tracks sharing meals, worships, and socials. UUA programs offered included the Multicultural Religious Education Renaissance Module, a Groundworks Anti-Racism training, and a YRUU Leadership Development Training. Marketing Outreach Director Valerie Holton from Congregational Services presented a track on best practices around membership development drawing from learnings from the metro advertising strategies. The Rev. Matt Tittle led a track based on the curriculum that he has written with Gail Tittle for faith development among lay leaders.
- "Peacemaking for Congregations" will be the theme of the Dwight Brown Leadership Experience intensive trainings offered this spring at both Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church (Houston) and All Souls Unitarian Church (Tulsa). The Rev. Thea Nietfeld has brought together Nonviolent Communication Trainers and local clergy to design a three-day event that will train leaders to help their congregations dwell together in peace and be a force for peace in their communities. Discussions of the Congregational Study Action Issue on Peacemaking and the historic role of churches in peacemaking will be conducted.
- Hearing that radio broadcasting channels were being made available, Mary Frances of Norman (OK) UU Fellowship has spearheaded an effort for that congregation to claim one of these spots. She has put together a team of engineers, radio professionals, and organizers to make application for NUUF's Voice of Reason Radio with the intent to

offer secularized programming. The FCC will be making decisions about the granting of these licenses in January of 2008.

### **Central Midwest District**

- In the Central Midwest District, we have expanded the kinds of workshops we can offer in various aspects of leadership development by co-sponsoring them with one of our congregations that wants to put something on. Two examples this fall include Leadership 101 co-sponsored with Third Unitarian Church of Chicago and the Caring Congregations Training co-sponsored with Dupage UU Church in Naperville, IL. These were in addition to annual offerings like the stewardship conference (with Wayne Clark this past October) and Presidents' gatherings that we hold around the district (November in St. Louis, January in Milwaukee).
- We held a Youth Advisor Convocation for district youth advisors. About 40 advisors participated in the event created by our district Youth and Young Adult Coordinator, Kimberlee Tomczak. It was designed to offer training, networking and spiritual development to congregational youth advisors.
- An interesting partnership has developed between the District Co-employed Staff and the APF coordinator and Laurel Amabile. The four of us got together for several days in Wisconsin to visit congregations and create strategies for increasing fair share contributions. We also did this last February in the Chicago area.

### **St. Lawrence District**

- The seven congregations in the St. Lawrence western cluster have begun 30 weeks of underwriters' announcements on an area PBS radio affiliate. The notices, referring listeners to a website for more information, run at the beginning and end of A Prairie Home Companion.

- Professional consultants and coordinators supplement the work of St. Lawrence' District Executive, Program Consultant, and Administrative Secretary. The bookkeeper, communications coordinator, district assembly coordinator, fundraising coordinator, part-time ministerial settlement representative, planning consultant, reporter, social justice coordinator, young adult/campus ministry consultant and youth coordinator may work on their own or with volunteers, and receive small stipends from the district.
- The St. Lawrence growth committee now offers training for Chalice Lighter Ambassadors by conference call. The training, developed with help from the Joseph Priestley District, is part of an effort to increase the number of Chalice Lighters and expected funds per call in the district.

### **Florida District**

- The exciting news in the FLD is the up-coming Tampa Bay-Sarasota marketing campaign. 11 of 13 congregations are actively participating. Valerie Holton, in conjunction with our Southwest Cluster, hosted a "best Practices workshop in November with nearly 100 people in attendance. FLD Lifespan Program Consultant, Connie Goodbread, is working with congregational leaders to prepare congregations for an influx of families with children. JUUST Change consultant, Paula Cole Jones will host a "diversity awareness training" in January. The campaign launches February 9th in St. Petersburg, with Bill Sinkford the keynoter.
- Elsewhere in the FLD, four congregations are in the midst of or getting ready for ground-breaking on new facilities.

### **Mass Bay District**

- The weekend of November 2-3 the district fully funded and sponsored a Young Adult Campus Ministry Training at First Church Boston. 25 young adults and students (one high school senior) attended and learned how to connect with congregations and organize UU groups on campus. The same weekend the district youth steering

committee sponsored a youth Leadership Development Conference. These conferences are building on the district's efforts to keep our youth and young adults as part of our growth initiatives for the future of Unitarian Universalism.

- The Arts and Crafts of Congregational Leadership workshops are drawing lay leaders at a nice clip. On November 12<sup>th</sup> Liz Strong led the religious educators, ministers, and RE committee members from 9 congregations with tiny (0-30) to small (31 to 50) children and youth in their RE programs spent the evening exploring how they can organize their RE programs more efficiently, ground their work in a solid Unitarian Universalist Covenant philosophy, and strengthen the relationships among themselves to facilitate growth that will give them a critical mass in numbers that will in turn facilitate a more powerful presence with the congregation, the community and the wider Unitarian Universalist faith in the district. Other workshops in this series by Rev. Strong include, Tween and Teens, What to Do? And Parents as Spiritual Guides.
- Terasa Cooley has led two sessions as well on "Radical Hospitality" and "Through the Looking Glass: a New Model of Strategic Planning" which were hosted by local congregations but drew leaders from all over the district. Not only do these trainings give leaders an opportunity to learn about a specific subject, they create connections among congregations that have previously not existed in this district. Future programs will focus on conflict transformation and size transition. One of these will be a cooperative effort with Ballou Channing.

### **Joseph Priestly District**

- The Joseph Priestley District held its third annual Racial Justice Conference October 27 at the UU Congregation of Fairfax, VA with thirty-three congregations and 140 people present. Featured speaker was Professor Sherrilyn Ifill, Beacon Press author of "On the Courthouse Lawn" which described lynching in Maryland. There were a dozen workshops led by ministers and lay leaders including Taquiena

Boston and Bill Gardiner. The Journey Toward Wholeness Committee is meeting with specific leaders in congregations - board, ministers, DREs, social justice - throughout this year to deepen people's understanding of antiracism work and to reach a "tipping point" within the district on becoming a multi-racial district.

- There was a UU Revival October 13 at All Souls, Washington called Jubilee. Approximately 500 people gathered from many of the Baltimore/Washington congregations for an afternoon worship service and reception. A mass choir of over 100 sang under the direction of three choir directors and several ministers spoke including Revs. Rob Hardies, John Crestwell, Bill Murray, Bill Welch, Nancy Ladd, Lillie Henley, and DE Richard Speck as well as UUA Trustee Chuck Wooldridge and JPD Board member Natalie Fenimore. Evelyn Spurgin, co-chair with Bill Welch of the Baltimore/Washington Growth Committee, also participated. Due to the success of this gathering a group is already starting the planning for next year with a goal of 1,000 people.
- The UU Fellowship at Easton, MD and the Sugarloaf Congregation of UUs dedicated new buildings in October. The UU Church of the South Jersey Shore will have its groundbreaking November 18. The district is sponsoring a new congregation in Dover, DE which will hold its public worship starting in April. We are working with three other emerging congregations at present and have plans for more. We are also reorganizing our growth leadership to be more coordinated in the various activities around growth. Our Chalice Lighter contributors surpassed 4,000 members.
- The district staff has begun using on-line training events for members of congregations. Over the summer DE Richard Speck conducted board training, policy governance training, and, with Elyse Reznick, JPD Board president, a seminar with congregational presidents. Director for Growth Pat Infante used on-line web based software for trainings on hospitality and anonymous visitors training. As we become more familiar with the **Persony** software, we will be offering even more training over the internet.

- Healthy Congregation training will again be offered starting in January for the fifth year to congregational teams around the district.
- We hosted stewardship training in September led by Wayne Clark that brought teams from congregations to Mt. Vernon, VA Unitarian Church. Fifteen congregations sent forty-five people to the workshop. We are already planning another training next fall. Joan Priest, Development Director, organized the training and continues to work with congregations around stewardship and endowment issues.