

# **New Orleans Strategic Planning Group Advisory Board**

**Our charge:** The strategic planning group shall envision and design a plan for a vibrant, robust Unitarian Universalist congregational presence in a rebuilt New Orleans. The plan should encompass the vision and needs of particular congregations but be focused holistically and systemically, rather than atomistically, on how Unitarian Universalism might be strongest and most vital in the greater New Orleans area.

## **Summary of Meeting December 15-16, 2005**

**In attendance:** Burton Carley, Jyaphia Christos-Rodgers, Wayne Clark, Becky Cureau, Mary An Godshall, Dick Harris, Marilyn Malone, Marta Valentin, Jim VanderWeele and Bill Sinkford.

### **The group developed a covenant for working together:**

- Outside of the meetings, we will speak as one voice
- We will be careful about our communication (Think about how the group would react to your comments)
- All ideas will be welcome and none will be dismissed
- Step up/step back to allow participation by each member (If you don't know an extrovert's opinion, it's because she hasn't told you. If you don't know an introvert's opinion, it's because you haven't asked her.)
- Process observations will be shared as needed (as opposed to waiting for the end of a meeting)
- When we are faced with conflict, we will assume the best of others
- We will practice care-front (as opposed to confront)
- Our preferred decision-making process is consensus, but we will use voting when needed
- We will keep focused on the big picture; the future of UUism in New Orleans

**A list of "burning" questions was created.** These questions will help shape our work (questions that were answered during the meeting are excluded):

1. How will we address issues of social, racial, and economic justice?
2. How should we frame a discussion about the various resources (money) that each congregation (North Shore, Community Church, First UU) brings to the table?
3. How can we move toward a process of "we-ness?"

4. How can we respect the different cultures in each of the three churches while taking a big picture approach? What needs to be done to keep the three churches going for the short term?
5. How can we develop trust among ourselves as we move forward?
6. How can we care for our ministers in whatever direction we choose?
7. How can we make responsible recommendations to the funding panel?
8. What information is needed to make recommendations to the Funding Panel when the future of NO is so unclear?
9. How do we gather accurate information?
10. How does our work connect to the grass roots community?
11. Will there be an advertising campaign?

**Wayne led the group in an exercise.** He asked: How might the stress of trauma influence our work as strategic planners? What coping techniques have been helpful? (Answers to the first question were incorporated into our covenant)

- Physically get away from NO for awhile
- Keep telling my story
- Take care of my body (healthy food and regular exercise)
- Avoid risky behavior (alcohol/drugs)
- Spend time with supportive people
- Break tasks into small pieces or take tasks one at a time
- Give myself time (permission) to heal
- Celebrate small successes
- Establish (or return to) routines
- Keep asking: “How am I feeling?”

**A list of fast track items was developed:**

1. Respond to the short-term proposals from each of the three congregations
2. Get necessary approvals for the demolition of Community Church
3. Decide if Community Church needs a project manager (First UU already has one)
4. Determine what grant-writing help is available (A role for the partner churches?)
5. Seek lifespan education resources for North Shore (Jennifer Nichols-Payne? . . . Can North Shore and First UU share DRE?)
6. Address administrative need for North Shore

**1. Action Item. Group recommendation to Funding Panel: Continue to fund religious professionals (defined as all paid staff) for an additional six months**

**The group defined a “healthy presence” of UUism in New Orleans:**

- Our churches will be financially self sufficient
- Congregations will have regularly scheduled worship services

- We will have a relationship with the city
- There will be active lifespan education programs
- There will be enough support staff to maintain “full service” churches
- A publicity/marketing program will be created and implemented
- There will be discernable outreach programs
- Buildings will be well maintained

**2. Action Item. By January 11<sup>th</sup>, each group member will send to Wayne a list of possible activities that might help implement each item listed above.** For example, to create financially self sufficient congregations we could:

1. Conduct person-to-person annual budget drives for each congregation
2. Create (or revitalize) a planned giving program for each congregation
3. Plan a capital campaign to raise money for programs, staff, and buildings for each church
4. Develop a plan to share resources (staff, facilities, etc.)

[Note: We are brainstorming a list of possibilities, without any evaluation, at this point.]

**3. Action Item. Group members from the three churches will discuss common religious education needs and develop recommendations for efficient use of resources (people, materials, programs, etc.) They will present their recommendations at our January 27-28, 2006 meeting.**

**4. Action Item. Group recommendation to Funding Panel: Money (estimated at \$174,825) be provided for the restoration of First UU if the city will grant a building permit and if flood insurance can be obtained.**

**5. Action Item. Group recommendation to Funding Panel: Money (estimated at \$40,390) be provided to Community Church to obtain rental space, equipment, and furniture for an office through June 30, 2006.**

The group will conduct a telephone conference call on January 11, 2006 from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm Central. The group will meet again on

Friday January 27, 2006 at 9:00 am through Saturday January 28, 2006 until 2:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne B. Clark