

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 Meetings January 27-28, 2006

In attendance: Burton Carley, Jyaphia Christos-Rodgers, Wayne Clark,
*Becky Cureau, Mary An Godshall, Dick Harris, Marilyn Malone, Jim VanderWeele and Mark Westergard

*Becky was in attendance on the 27th but unable to attend on the 28th
Marta Valentin was ill and unable to attend

Mark Westergard was welcomed to his first on-site meeting.

After check-in, the covenant was reaffirmed by all.

North Shore possible activities toward implementing a healthy UU presence in NO area. Please see attachment. (Note: Community and First had presented their suggestions at the December 15-16th meetings.) See Attachment 1.

Community Church update (since December 15-16th meetings.)

Have had three meetings with past presidents to discuss 1) Possible relocation, 2) Their building fund, 3) Financial commitment dinner in February, and 4) Conversation about being prepared for whatever might come next. Another meeting is scheduled for February.

Agreed to be an advocate of local, affordable housing.

Agreed to maintain the current property, regardless of a final decision about its disposition.

On January 22nd, an after church dialogue was held to update everyone (27 in attendance). A straw poll indicated that 95% of those in attendance want to remain at their current location. The building has been secured and they have decided to gut the building (a local Baptist Church will provide the service at no charge). They are thinking seriously about cleaning the building and staying at the location, although the city has made no final decision about whether reconstruction will be permitted in the area. They have a volunteer project manager (a member who is committed to staying at the current location). They are moving forward with increasing their capital fund

They have signed a five-month lease for office space at the Trade Center at \$590 plus utilities each month. Not yet clear about equipment availability. They will be in conversation with First about ways to share administrative costs. However, Alex (current First administrator), does not want to work at the Trade Center. No final decisions yet about sharing administrative services. Burton encouraged Community and First to consider one administrative office for both congregations.

Action Item #1: Jim and Marta will share a progress report during our next conference call.

They are expecting \$61,500 from Church Mutual for building insurance settlement.

First Church update (Since December 15-16th meetings.)

RE program is up and running.

Partner church (First Parish Cambridge, MA) has delivered backpacks for RE students.

The new roof has been installed and the Church Mutual check is expected.

Prior to cleaning the building, all usable items are being gathered.

Joe Sullivan led a brainstorming session with 35 members last weekend. Joe also facilitated a Board retreat. The Board will recommend (to the congregation) that the congregation remain in the current building.

Most current membership estimate: 79 members have returned, 17 are not sure about returning, 25 friends have returned and are active. There have been three recent Board resignations

They are planning a low-key pledge campaign. Will become more formal later.

There has been no start-up meeting (to focus on being in right relations) with Marta yet, but the Board would like to have one soon. Marta has not yet been installed and that will wait until the congregation is settled into the building.

Burton encouraged the Community and First leaders to consider a joint call (at one of their joint Sunday services) for new members. He encouraged the two groups to have a conversation about how one congregation's decisions effects decisions to be made by the other congregation. He encouraged the two groups to answer the question: "What would you say to someone who asked to become a member?" Jyaphia suggested that it's not a good time to seek new members and that it would be better to allow growth to occur organically.

Burton indicated that the Memphis congregation is willing to purchase sheet music for the three NO area congregations. The Memphis folks are also interested in visiting NO in April, perhaps to conduct a shared choir performance. The Memphis congregation is also willing to share religious education curricula and materials.

Wayne voiced concern that the three congregations make a more informed decision about their future locations. For example, long term cash flow projections have not been made to determine the long term fiscal viability of remaining in their current locations.

Action Item # 2: Wayne will send a cash flow projection spreadsheet to each of the three congregations. Each congregation agreed to complete the spreadsheet prior to the next on-site meeting (March 17-18th). **Wayne** will review the information and lead a discussion at the next meeting. (See Attachment 2)

Action Item #3: Burton will clarify the answer to the question, "If a donor contributes a large sum of money for the specific benefit of one congregation, will that congregation have direct access to that money?"

Action Item #4: Burton will ask Meg Riley two questions: "What has happened to the \$10,000 allocated for Rev. David Ord? Does the congregation need to report that amount to the IRS for tax purposes?"

The group clarified the definition of a congregational member as any person who makes a pledge of record.

Action Item #5: Wayne will share information about a book titled *Taking Care of the Caregiver* to the group members;

Harbaugh, Gary L. *Caring for the Caregiver*. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1992.

Harbaugh addresses an often ignored group of 'caregivers.' The clergy. Offering a wealth of information on personnel support systems of various churches, the book confronts the clergy with their responsibility to care for themselves as well as others. It challenges congregations to provide 'preventive' care and on-going support. The book is an easy read of 74 pages, plus appendices. Some translation required of UU readers.

Action Item #6: Burton will ask Kay Montgomery for a monthly update of Gulf Coast Relief contributions and allocations.

Burton and Wayne asked how they can be most helpful as the group moves forward.

Action Item #7: Wayne will provide more information about helpful congregational infrastructures.

Action item #8: Prior to the next meeting, **Wayne will** share more information about the components of strategic planning, including specific questions to ask in any strategic planning process.

Action Item #9: Burton and Wayne will create a written document including background information and a summary of our work for distribution to the three congregations.

Action Item #10: Wayne will continue to put meeting summaries onto the UUA Web site.

Action Item #11: Becky was asked to pursue several issues with the Funding Panel.

1. Ask the panel to create a formal invoice form for congregations to use when asking for money.
2. Ask the panel to provide an explanation of the application process and procedures for asking for money.
3. Ask for reaffirmation that the Funding Panel will approve allocation of money by each specific proposal, rather than in less specific blocks of requests to be used at discretion of each congregation.
4. Ask the panel to clarify the amount of detail needed for each request and the amount of discretion that each congregation has.
5. Ask the panel if there is a way to determine the location of money (after it has been requested) in the pipeline.
6. Ask the panel to confirm that all funding proposals (from the three congregations) be first presented to the NO Strategic Group before being passed along to the panel.
7. Ask the panel if they need a revised proposal (\$1,643 less than initial proposal) from Community Church.

Action Item #12: Wayne will ask Erik Kesting how to access summaries of the Funding Panel meeting.

Dick and Marilyn presented the North Shore proposal for funding of three items: 1)Office equipment, 2)Money to fund a part-time administrator, and 3)Money to renovate an existing garage to be used as an office. After a lengthy conversation, Jyaphia moved and Wayne seconded a motion to approve \$16,550 for the first two items because they are connected to the storm damage. The motion passed unanimously. The proposal for garage

renovation was denied because it is a capital item not covered under the guidelines of Gulf Coast Relief Fund.

Action Item #13: Dick and Marilyn will present the revised proposal to the Funding Panel. (Note to Dick and Marilyn: It is probably best for Becky to present the proposal at the next meeting of the Funding Panel. Please be in touch with Becky, mindful that she missed this conversation on Saturday. Please distribute (by e-mail) your revised proposal to the group.

The group created a schedule of future on-site meetings and telephone conference calls, understanding that all of the meetings may not be necessary. (Note to group: We did not set dates for conference calls beyond February 15th so I have chosen Wednesday evenings approximately half way between scheduled on-site meeting dates.)

February 15	conference call	September 6	conference call
March 17-18	on-site	September 29-30	on-site
March 29	conference call	October 18	conference call
April 14-15	on-site	October 27-28	on-site
April 26	conference call	November 8	conference call
May 12-13	on-site	November 17-18	on-site
May 31	conference call	November 29	conference call
June 9-10	on-site	December 8-9	on-site
August 4-5	on-site		

Wayne led the group through a brainstorming exercise to answer the question: “If we all fell asleep for the next five years, what would we like to see (in relation to a healthy UU presence in NO) when we awake. Wayne has organized the items by theme. The items are pasted below in addition to being sent as a separate attachment.

Action Item #14: Wayne will discern themes among the individual items and return the information to the group. (See Attachment 3)

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne