

Healthy Relationships: *What Were They Thinking?*
Dialogues between Unitarian Universalist Board Trustees and our Member Congregations
February—September 2010
October 16, 2010

These are interesting economic times—[there is a] worldwide roller coaster, fear goes deep, children are moving home, businesses closing, good to be able to bring up "we are all in this together"—like the song "Blue Boat home": you are not alone.

I feel motivated. [It] brought home that we are not alone.

You brought up questions we don't often talk about—we are so involved in the minutia of day to day.

I am pleased that the Board is asking, and glad we were sampled. It is fun to talk to a real person who can understand there are concerns without thinking every congregation is a maverick.

[We all] need to be listening—invite us all in. You have broken through something in me.

These are a few of the closing comments from the 64 congregations that were interviewed by trustees on the UUA Board from February through September of 2010, along with the common refrain “Will we get feedback on the outcome of these conversations?” and “We should do it more often.” One of the major responsibilities of a board under Policy Governance®, the purpose of the interviews was fourfold:

1. Who represents the congregation? Given that we are accountable to "congregations," who should we be talking to within those congregations?
2. What values are most important to our congregations in healthy relationships? What can we do together to create a healthy relationship between the UUA Board and our member congregations?
3. What outcomes are important to our congregations? The UUA Board has a set of 20 outcomes or "ends" created from hundreds of conversations with UUs over several years. Which of these "ends" are most "top of mind" for our member congregations when they think about what differences they want us to make together in the world?
4. Is this process (“real time” interviews between trustees and congregational leaders) sustainable?

Key Findings

1. Though not consistent across all congregations, the called and elected leadership was most often cited as being “who speaks for the congregation.”
2. Healthy organizational relationships are built on healthy personal relationships, which are often absent entirely between member congregations and the UUA Board. When congregations think about “the UUA,” they typically think about the UUA staff and the services provided.
3. Healthy relationships are most often cited as based on trust, respect, and honesty. In addition, a healthy relationship with “the UUA” includes mutuality and common goals.

Healthy Relationship: *What Were They Thinking?*

4. There is a hunger for more personal 2-way communication with the UUA Board, and are willing for it to be electronic.
5. Most (but not all) of our “ends” are also identified (unaided) by our congregations, though there appears to be little overt appetite to be a high-expectation faith.
6. The ends discussions was the most difficult question in the process, and a few interviewers skipped it entirely
7. Congregations want to be part of something larger, with the ability to make differences, while at the same time many feel alone.
8. There are clear benefits in the personal nature of these contacts but the current process of face to face interviews is not sustainable.

Recommendations

1. The continuation of linkage in a sustainable way should be a high priority of the UUA Board, at the possible cost of possible cost of other activities.
2. Collaborate with the District President’s Association (DPA) to continue real time person-to-person interviews with called and elected congregational leaders. Though not all district boards operate under Policy Governance® (or a reasonable facsimile thereof), the desire to have meaningful conversations with those to whom we are accountable is a common goal.
3. Ensure that future linkage has input from all Sources.
4. Follow through on the UUA board communications plans begun at the April meeting, utilizing 2-way personal touches in content and delivery, including social media and video conferencing. Emphasize respect, trust, and honesty in communications and actions, the need for mutuality and support from all parties, and our common goals.
5. Consider additional linkage work with our Sources of Authority and Accountability (Carver’s “Moral Owners”) about potentially adding an end around promoting religious tolerance.
6. Make linkage contacts and other 2-way communication with our Sources a clear expectation of UUA trustees prior to their election.

Methodology

A sample of 100 congregations was chosen randomly by numbering all member congregations of the UUA, from 1 to 1061, dividing into 10 equal groups (by size), and selecting 10 congregations within each group with a random number generator¹. The final completed tally of 64 congregations provided a 90% confidence level with a 10% margin of error. The list of selected congregations was divided among 23 trustees and the moderator. The Linkage Working Group created interview guides and an online input form to collect data, primary utilizing Appreciative Inquiry. The guides were tested (before distributing to the Trustees) with three

¹ A special thank you to Ian Evison, Central Midwest District Congregational Services Director, for his assistance in the sampling methodology.

Healthy Relationship: *What Were They Thinking?*

congregations to get feedback and make appropriate revisions². The first set of interviews was done with 12 Texas congregations during the January 2010 board meeting in San Antonio. Interviews were then done either in person or by phone with a group that consisted of the board president, called minister, and other lay leaders as determined by the board president. In several cases, the District President served as recorder.

Note: Though we have attempted not to imply exactness, any numerical results applied against the entire set of UUA member congregations should be viewed as directional, due to the small sample size and human interpretation in recording and categorizing. For example, though 57% of the congregations cited feelings of exuberance and excitement at being part of a UUA that accomplished significant differences working across all part of the Association, the “real” answer (if all 1061 congregations were interviewed) could be anywhere between 47%-67%, with a 90% chance this was accurate, and even that is subject to interpretation. Still, we believe attempts to quantify, if done carefully, are useful ways to understand the results.

Summary of results

Who speaks for the congregation?

The minister and board president were mentioned most often as “who speaks for the congregation” (about 2/3 of the congregations), with three indicating specifically that no one has authority to do so. Nearly 20% indicated a board member had that authority. This tended to be more often the minister in larger congregations (>165 members) though the sample size is too small to be conclusive.³

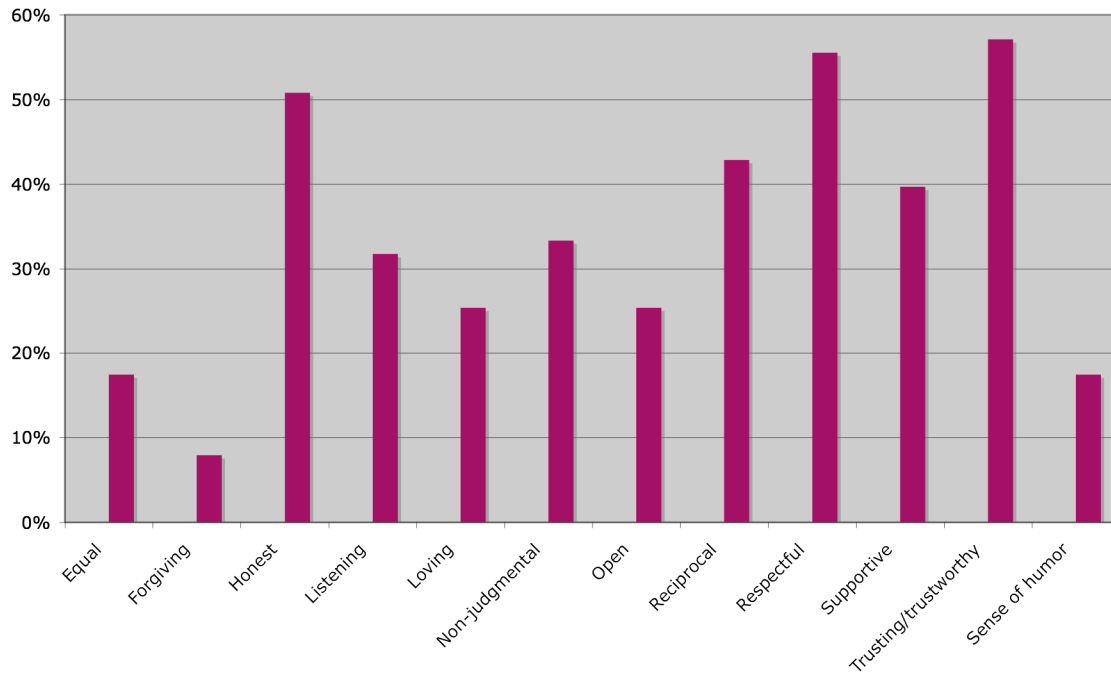
Values around healthy relationships

Mentioned most often was respectful and trusting/trustworthy (nearly 60% of the time) and honest (over 50%). See below for the most commonly cited responses. In addition to these values, the one cited most often for healthy relationships between organizations was shared values and/or goals.

² One of those revisions was a change in the name of the topic from “Right Relationship” to “Healthy Relationships.” All three test congregations said “right relationship” put them on the defensive, implying a standard they were not meeting.

³ Less than 10% of the sample interviews expressed any controversy over this question.

Values of Healthy Relationships



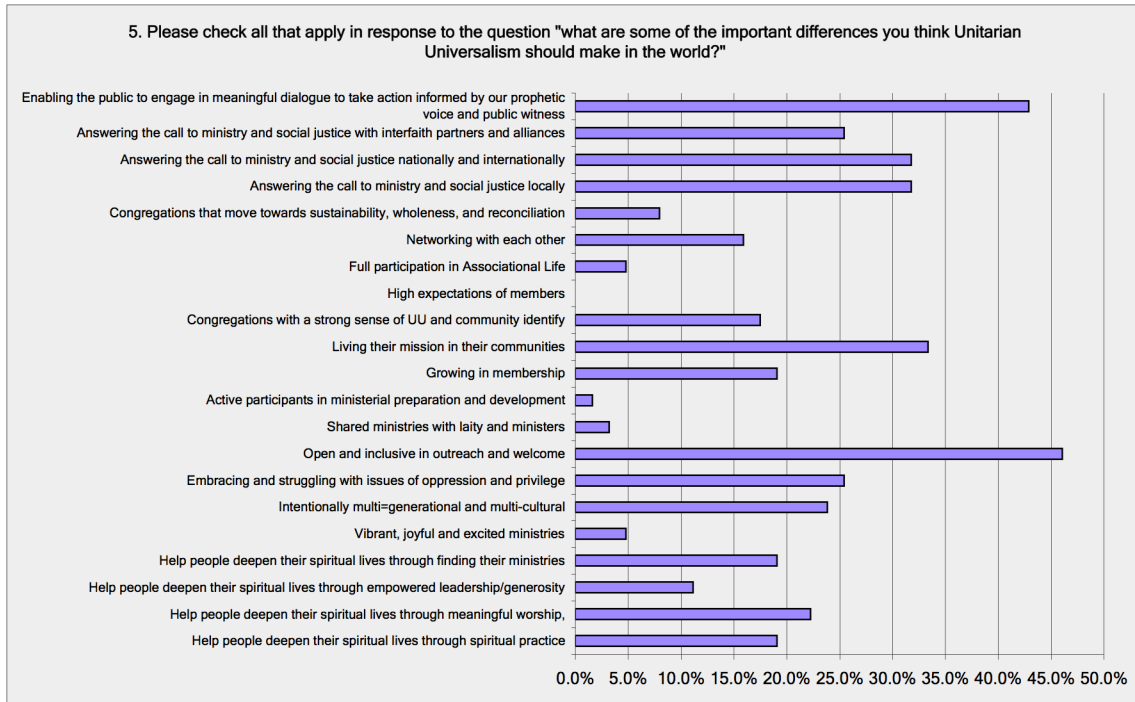
Which “ends” do our congregations most often identify?

In response to “what are some of the important differences you think Unitarian Universalism should make in the world,” trustees mapped what was identified to one of the 20 differences that are the “ends” (outcomes) shared for the Association between the Board and the President, or the statements were later mapped during the analysis. The most commonly cited was “open and inclusive in outreach and welcome,” followed closely by “enabling the public to engage in meaningful dialogue to take action informed by our prophetic voice and public witness”⁴. “High expectations of members” was not cited by any of the interviewed congregations, with only one identifying “active participants in ministerial preparation and development” and 2 identifying “shared ministries with laity and ministers.”⁵ Several trustees mentioned that this was the most difficult question in the process, and a few interviews skipped it entirely.

⁴ We have done several rankings of ends by various groups, and this is by far the highest this end has scored. Though previous rankings were not representative samples, this may suggest Standing on the Side of Love activities have been noticed by congregations, and several mentioned it by name.

⁵ “High expectations of members” is frequently cited by church researchers as a key component to congregational growth and vitality. That this end is without mention in our conversations is provocative. We wonder if “high expectations” is a matter of means and not ends (*i.e.* a bias in the collection of data), and if UU congregations and the UUA should further pursue this objective.

Healthy Relationship: *What Were They Thinking?*

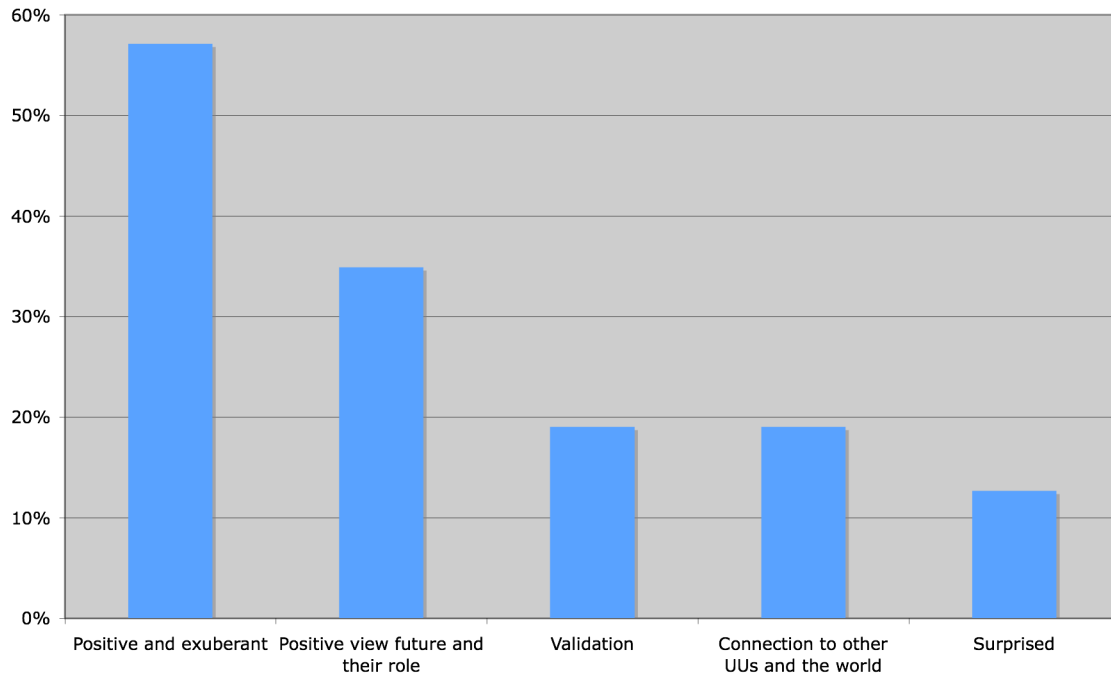


An area identified by interviewed congregations but not included explicitly in our current ends was around promoting religious tolerance and respect in the public square. Comments relating to this are shown in Appendix C. There was also a specific comment about youth, which does not appear to be captured in “multi-generational congregations”: “Provide a place for youth where they are safe, can explore their possibilities, and can grow their leadership skills within UU principles.”

Being part of something larger

Once the congregation had identified an outcome in the previous question, they were asked the following: “Put yourself ahead 5 years, and assume that [the most inspirational example from #5] has happened across the United States largely because of what the Unitarian Universalist Association had done. How would you feel about being part of this Association?” This question was designed to encourage the interviewed congregation to imagine the possible of the future: that they were part of accomplishing something that was very important to them five (or more) years from now, and was only accomplished by our entire Association working together. Over half of the interviewed congregations described feelings of exuberance and celebration, a third feeling empowered and hopeful about the future. This is also one of the questions many trustees found opened the most potential for thinking about a different kind of relationship, with relatively little cynicism in imagining it this way. At least seven of the interviewed congregations described currently “feeling alone.”

Feelings about making a difference as an Association



Representative comments included:

- [I would feel] connected to something larger without a tragedy to do it
- Proud, thrilled, excited, scared because it would mean change
- They had trouble saying how they would feel because they could not imagine it happening
- It's about time
- UUA has become a bloated monstrosity that has forgotten about the people out there. We are a lone voice out here. What do we get for our thousands of dollars?
- They already feel this way about the UUA. They specifically mentioned Standing on the Side of Love as something they were proud of and talked about.
- [Making a difference] is what makes this religion real

What a healthy relationship with "this UUA of the future" would look like

Fifty responses addressed how the congregations would feel or behave: they would feel part of and connected to a larger entity (UUA) and connected to other congregations (24), congregations would participate in denominational affairs and meet their financial obligations like Fair Share (18), they would feel empowered to be part of our democratic processes (5), and they would be informed (1), interested (1), and proud (1).

Healthy Relationship: *What Were They Thinking?*

Thirty-four responses noted the characteristics of a healthy relationship, emphasizing mutuality: mutual communication (10), mutual listening (4), mutual interest (3), mutual trust (1), mutual knowing (1), mutual work on relationship (1), reciprocity (4), supportive (9), and affirming (1).

Seven responses noted the shared result of a healthy relationship: mutual outreach and cooperation (5) and synergy (2). Six responses noted the positive effects for a congregation in a healthy relationship with the UUA: increased diversity (2), more energy (1), relevance (1), maturity (1), growth (1).

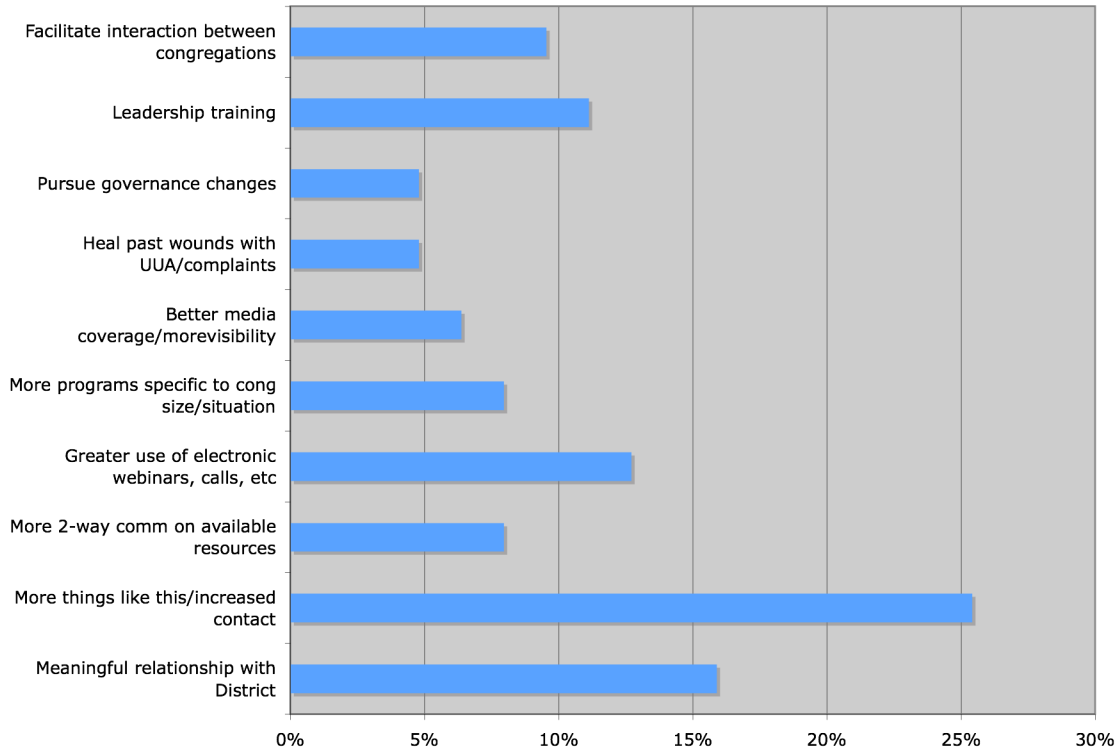
What we could be doing now to insure healthy relationships

The single greatest suggestion, cited spontaneously by 25%⁶ of the congregations interviewed, was to do more personal outreach/interviews like these. More than 20% identified two-way communication, with the majority specifically suggesting making more use of electronic two-way communication, such as webinars and conference calls. Sixteen percent of the congregations interviewed cited a better relationship with the District. Some of the specific suggestions included:

- a debate between a knowledgeable UU and Glenn Beck (to improve visibility)
- lunch gatherings at District Assemblies with the UUA trustee
- UUA send information to all congregation board members, not just presidents
- link the UUA website more visibly to the district websites
- introduce facilitated blogs where ministers and lay leaders can get answers
- do something to subsidize GA delegates
- expand web broadcasts of GA
- reinforce being part of the UUA from the pulpit

⁶ The sample size suggests that we could be 90% confident that the “real” range if all congregations were interviewed would be somewhere between 15% and 35%. This range applies to all cited percentages.

Healthy Relationship: *What Were They Thinking?*



Sustainability

This process is labor intensive, due as much to the time it takes to set up the interview, as it does conducting the interview itself. It was not unusual for several weeks (or even months) to elapse in scheduling a single interview, usually requiring multiple contacts. Though feedback from trustees who did interviews was very positive (see Appendix B), 5 trustees did no interviews at all, with the rest ranging from one to ten⁷. A smaller board makes it even less likely to get the number of interviews that could be considered representative of our member congregations. And reducing the margin or error to 5% instead of 10% would more than triple the sample size.

Because nearly half of UU member congregations have less than 100 members, small congregations represented half of the sample. Though there were 9 congregations contacted that we were unable to interview, these were spread consistently across all size categories. The remaining 29 congregations were not contacted, and/or the responsible trustee provided no information on them. There appeared to be a greater reluctance to contact small congregations – 8 congregations in the half of the sample with the largest congregations (>95) were not contacted versus 18 of the smallest (<96).

⁷ A previous linkage attempt to validate “ends” in Spring of 2009 had similar results: 12 of 19 districts reported on their conversations.

Appendix A
Interviewed Congregations

District.	Name	City	ST	Membershi p 2/1/2009
Ballou Channing	First Parish in Plymouth	Plymouth	MA	95
Ballou Channing	Unity Church of North Easton	North Easton	MA	114
Ballou Channing	First Universalist Society	Franklin	MA	225
Central Midwest	UU Church of the Lakes	Elkhorn	WI	24
Central Midwest	Green Bay Area UU Fellowship	Green Bay	WI	70
Central Midwest	The UU Church	Rockford	IL	354
Central Midwest	Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship	Carbondale	IL	176
Clara Barton	UU Society: East	Manchester	CT	292
Florida District	UU Church of Brevard	W Melbourne	FL	21
Florida District	UU Fellowship of Sun City Center	Sun City Center	FL	33
Florida District	UU Fellowship of Charlotte County	Port Charlotte	FL	73
Florida District	UU Fellowship of St Augustine	St. Augustine	FL	78
Florida District	Unit. Univ. Fellowship of Marion County	Summerfield	FL	113
Florida District	UU Fellowship of Gainesville	Gainesville	FL	301
Heartland District	Circle UU Fellowship	Indianapolis	IN	32
Heartland District	People's Church	Ludington	MI	69
Heartland District	All Souls Community Church of West Michigan	Grand Rapids	MI	129
Heartland District	All Souls Unitarian Church	Indianapolis	IN	368
Joseph Priestley	UU Church of Hagerstown	Hagerstown	MD	64
Joseph Priestley	UU Church of the Restoration	Philadelphia	PA	86
Joseph Priestley	UUs of the Cumberland Valley	Boiling Springs	PA	151
Mass Bay District	First Parish of Sudbury Mass UU	Sudbury	MA	203
Mass Bay District	First Unitarian Society in Newton	Newton	MA	341
Metro New York	UU Fellowship of Sussex County	Newton	NJ	50
Metro New York	First Unitarian Congregational Society	Brooklyn	NY	238
Metro New York	UU Church at Washington Crossing	Titusville	NJ	243
Metro New York	UU Congregation of Monmouth County	Lincroft	NJ	280
Mid-South District	First Universalist Church	Camp Hill	AL	12
Mid-South District	UU Congregation of Oxford	Oxford	MS	59

Healthy Relationship: *What Were They Thinking?*

Mountain Desert	UU Church of Ogden	Ogden	UT	108
Mountain Desert	The UU Congregation of Santa Fe NM	Santa Fe	NM	339
Northern New England	UU Congregation of the Upper Valley	Norwich	VT	124
Northern New England	UU Church of Brunswick	Brunswick	ME	168
Northern New England	UU Congregation in Milford	Milford	NH	208
Ohio-Meadville	First UU Church of Youngstown Ohio	Youngstown	OH	105
Ohio-Meadville	Allegheny UU Church	Pittsburgh	PA	110
Pacific Central	First UU Church of Stockton CA	Stockton	CA	164
Pacific Northwest	Anchorage UU Fellowship Inc	Anchorage	AK	195
Pacific Northwest	UU Congregation of Salem	Salem	OR	217
Pacific Northwest	Boise UU Fellowship	Boise	ID	232
Pacific Southwest	UU Fellowship of Kern County	Bakersfield	CA	75
Pacific Southwest	UU Fellowship of Laguna Beach	Laguna Beach	CA	88
Pacific Southwest	Granite Peak UU Congregation	Prescott	AZ	149
Prairie Star	The UU Fellowship of Salina	Salina	KS	38
Prairie Star	Headwaters UU Fellowship	Bemidji	MN	60
Prairie Star	UU Society of River Falls	River Falls	WI	83
Prairie Star	UU Fellowship of Manhattan	Manhattan	KS	103
Prairie Star	Unitarian Church	Lincoln	NE	277
Prairie Star	First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis	Minneapolis	MN	506
Prairie Star	White Bear UU Church	Mahtomedi	MN	618
Southwestern	Church of the Restoration UU	Tulsa	OK	20
Southwestern	UU Fellowship of Lafayette Louisiana	Lafayette	LA	22
Southwestern	San Marcos UU Fellowship	San Marcos	TX	32
Southwestern	Denton UU Fellowship	Denton	TX	71
Southwestern	UU Church of Midland	Midland	TX	77
St. Lawrence	UU Church of East Aurora	East Aurora	NY	56
St. Lawrence	The First Universalist Church of Rochester	Rochester	NY	133
St. Lawrence	UU Congregation of Saratoga Springs	Saratoga Springs	NY	147
St. Lawrence	First Unitarian Society of Schenectady	Schenectady	NY	406

Healthy Relationship: *What Were They Thinking?*

Thomas Jefferson	UU Peace Fellowship	Raleigh	NC	47
Thomas Jefferson	Greater Nashville UU Congregation	Nashville	TN	99
Thomas Jefferson	UU Community Church	Glen Allen	VA	185
Thomas Jefferson	First UU Church of Richmond Va	Richmond	VA	541
Thomas Jefferson	Eno River UU Fellowship	Durham	NC	609
Thomas Jefferson	UU Fellowship of Hendersonville	Hendersonville	NC	

Appendix B

Trustee Comments on the Experience

This congregation, while very small, has an identity closely linked with the Association and its Cluster. It is an outwardly looking group--they want to help support cluster-work, even as they remodel an old convenient store to be their first church building. Very enthusiastic. I was also intrigued by their consensus-based process.

Describing their relationship to the UUA in recent past: "sore, abandoned, no help, pissed off, got more support from [nearby congregation] than from UUA"

This one was a little slow getting started, but warmed quickly. I listened for a bit after we concluded the conference. Someone at the Lincoln commented, "he makes it sound like the board is real people."

This conversation started on a very low note -- one person described them as a "dying congregation afraid to admit it." Towards the ends we were talking about streaming GA video, the Tapestry of Faith course curriculum, and Google ads. They were energized and excited.

Great group but clearly identified the UUA as something other than us

They emphasized how much the relationship means to them; this was a good conversation. This is the second conversation in a row where the importance of "bringing something new and different" was highlighted as a key value in relationships.

This is about all: Ministers have a lot more (lasting) influence than they think. Congregations grow to reflect longer term ministers.

This is a congregation that is in an isolated area both geographically and politically. The congregation is a haven for left leaning free spirits. They really like being asked about these issues and this relationship.

An excellent linkage opportunity....I wish the logistics were less complicated and that I could do this regularly with more congregations.

We ended up having a fairly lengthy discussion about what had just happened on the AZ immigration law and its impact on GA in Phoenix. They are very worried about the law and the possibility of the loss of GA. The president and minister said they would be in on the state-wide call the following week.

I have been unable to schedule a conversation with this congregation. I have spoken to the minister twice and e-mailed the president several times and left a phone message for him.

I've spoken to several small congregations now. They seem so isolated.

A good experience.....

Healthy Relationship: *What Were They Thinking?*

Four people, including the minister, participated. After one set of dyads, they asked to respond as a group rather than in dyads. This is a congregation whose minister has been quite engaged at the national level but the congregation itself does not engage in activities outside of its boundaries. They are just too busy, they say.

Although congregation came through a very difficult conflict with a minister supported by UUA who was dismissed by congregation, they treated the linkage survey with utmost respect and collegiality with me as their Trustee

The experience of the workshop for them was viewed as the first step to building this healthy relationship we discussed in such detail.

They were very appreciative of the call, and was warming to see how they saw possibilities and got into topic. AGAIN, as with ALL my person visits to congregations, these folks strongly WANT to hear of learnings out of this linkage initiative.

This congregation did something similar when they got suspicious that their board was not trusted. They learned that a lot of their folks felt neglected by those making decisions, and they set up vehicles to address this. This appears to be a congregation that is re-inventing itself. Was a pleasure to interview them

Again, it was a real stretch to circle two items in #5 [UUA Board "Ends"]. The items listed are not in the thoughts of those being interviewed.

I have found all of these very valuable. All participants (except the prez who refused to participate at all) were very grateful for the outreach and questions. They were proud to be chosen.

Good experience -- 4 board members and ministers, all very engaged in the conversation, even though 2 of them knew very little about the UUA, DA, or GA. Small congregation that is doing a lot of thinking about governance and as a result has stronger lay involvement...discussion about the "UUA of the future" made me realize how far we are from that in terms of how congregations feel about being part of something like that
Took some effort to get this conversation going, say 30 min of effort, but then it took off on own and became very productive in content

This was a very diverse group. I think some of my questions spawned some important interaction w/i in the group and may have started discussion of a couple new social justice projects. I'll follow up in a few months.

Can see the aging secularist keeping this group small, except now most on Board have been members for ,3 years. Have managed to buy a house downtown, renovate it, add an attached sanctuary... worthwhile visit

When linkage (for me) is on a face-to-face basis the energy of the group was high. It was good to look into the eyes of the participants and truly listen.

Healthy Relationship: *What Were They Thinking?*

I think the effort of re-imagining a relationship between the UUA and congregations as a partnership took most of the energy; it was much harder to get answers about the specifics. But a very inspiring conversation for both the Board Chair and myself.

Very helpful to me and it was received very well. Participants were very pleased that we were asking them these kinds of questions. Follow-up will be very important, though - getting back to them with results and how we will use the information.

Although the congregation president was reluctant to schedule this meeting and did not herself participate, the five people who were there (including the minister) were energized and appreciated being one of the 100 randomly sampled congregations. They were the first group with whom I met who did not criticize the process.

As a lay leader, the congregational president felt disconnected from the UUA's work; most of that relationship had been shouldered by the minister. Many of the problems she faced came from a systemic lack of knowledge about what the UUA is and ought to be doing ("I don't know what I don't know"). She didn't know of paths to involvement for herself or her congregation beyond General Assembly. In general, there was a focus on public witness as the relationship between congregations and the UUA.

We all had a grand time! I found it extremely valuable and they seemed to appreciate it deeply.

Very energizing excellent meeting saw light bulbs going off as folks grasped where this all fits with GA and Congs and Bd & Staff... Not capturable in simple minded tool like S-Monkey (my bias showing)

One participant's comments:

I don't see what we are getting for our membership or how we are benefiting from being in the UUA.

Would like to know in the leadership at the UUA what is the percentage of humanist UUs.

Another comment from me: Question #5 seems the most difficult or misunderstood of the 9. I have not been prompting the two congregations with whom I have linked. Not getting many comments and the ones I have obtained require my "fudging" a bit to fit into the outcomes checklist.

Having good "discussions" though and think the congregations feel "special" for our soliciting their thoughts and feelings..

This was a lively phone conversation with four people, each at a different site. When the scheduled hour had elapsed, the board chair asked whether the others would be interested in continuing for another 20 minutes (which we did). There was clearly appreciation for the contact, great diversity of opinion--one person had been a UU for over 50 years and set a bit of a negative tone which the minister sought to balance. People clearly like to feel heard, but that's no surprise. It was hard to get them to focus on governance as opposed to program; this is a learning experience for us all.

Two of the participants dropped off the phone call before it was completed (phone problems, I believe). The group of three participants included the consulting minister, the president and the

Healthy Relationship: *What Were They Thinking?*

adult RE chair. They were very respectful but I sensed a great deal of frustration, based on their lack of UUA "knowledge." They want to sit down with a representative from the District and the UU congregations in their immediate area on a monthly basis to explore ways to work together in a meaningful way in the community, to work together to solve problems. They are in a politically conservative area and feel the need for expertise from UUA to talk about spreading UUism. They feel isolated from the District and UUA and don't know how to get or give help because of the gap between the District and them. The minister stated they need to get to know one another in the area and then build their work together.

Appendix C

Comments around “religious tolerance and respect in the public square.”

- Be a religion
- Embracing core spiritual values of all religions
- We help people translate religious language in a way that facilitates conversation across boundaries that are not often crossed: “WE ARE THE NEW PENTECOST”
- Inclusive of almost any other faith
- Provide alternative to fundamentalism
- Bring a kinder world where love versus fear is the motivator
- Promote tolerance and acceptance
- Eliminating hatred and ignorance
- Craving for a church that is a visible and strong religious alternative
- Modeling respect for religious diversity and religious tolerance
- Doesn’t require me to fear or hate
- Religious tolerance
- Acceptance of difference—honoring diversity
- Love
- Translate what others are saying
- Respectful listening and inquiring
- Application of logic and reason
- Provide collaborative work model
- Can model collaborative working

Appendix D

Questionnaire for Trustee Linkage Work
“Healthy Relationship” Version 4.3 (Phone Version)
Facilitator’s Guide

Time Required: 1 hour

What

A linkage conversation between the UUA Board and a Member Congregation of the Association, seeking mutual understanding of “a healthy relationship” between the two.

Who

A UUA Trustee, on behalf of the Board, in conversation with representatives of the Congregation. To make sure that the Board is in conversation with “the Congregation”—and not only individuals within the Congregation—we strongly suggest the following:

1. At least 3 representatives of the Congregation
2. Include the Board president and called minister (if they have one)
3. Anyone else involved only at the invitation of the Board President

When

Between January and April, 2010.

How

By telephone. It will be difficult to do large groups by telephone, so you probably want to encourage 4 or less, as long as they include the people listed above. The first choice would be to have the congregation together and with you on a speakerphone – an alternative would be to set up a conference bridge. See <http://www.freeconference.com/> if you want to establish your own free account that can be used at any time. See Version 2.3 for small in person groups, and 3.3 for large in person groups.

Brief conversation at the beginning of the call to ask them about their congregation could help build some rapport before you start, such as “I noticed on your website that..... could you tell me a little more about your congregation?”

Materials

Encourage them to have paper and pencil so they can jot down a few notes on what you will be asking them to think about.

Reported information turned in via online survey within one week of interview. Information may be collected by District President if they join meeting/call.

(5 min)

My name is _____; I'm a member of [Congregation] in [location]; and ["a Trustee-at-Large" or "the Trustee from the _____ District"] on the UUA Board. I wanted to start by thanking you all for taking time to help this important process. Today, we're going to talk about "healthy relationships." Because our Association is made up of Member Congregations, the Board wants to maintain a healthy relationship with our member congregations. Our conversation today will help us learn how. We'll take about an hour. Before we begin, I'd like to know who I'm talking to. Could folks please go around, and share your name and your role in the congregation? **[After everyone has introduced themselves]** Thank you. OK, let's begin!

(10 min)

"I am going to be asking you some questions about things that have happened in your congregation. Once I have asked the question, I will give you a few minutes to think about the situation I will describe, and then a few minutes more to talk among yourselves to decide which example to use from your own congregation to respond to the rest of the question."

1. "Tell me about a time when your congregation made a significant difference, inside or outside of the congregation, on something. What happened? **[Pause for each person to think, then ask them to briefly describe what they were thinking about, and decide together which example to use]**

2 min to think about time

2 min for the group to decide which example to use

What was the outcome? How did you feel about it? Describe that feeling a little more. **[If appropriate]**

5 min to describe it

Collect: feelings on input template

"If CNN found out about this and wanted to feature it as a human interest story and wanted to talk to "the person in charge", who would that be? "

Collect: who is "person in charge" on template

“The perspective you had as you were describing what happened at XXXX is that part of you that really loves and is invested in this congregation, that makes you willing to do the many things that you are doing to keep it functioning and strong. Please keep wearing that “hat” as we spent the rest of our time together, as this is the part of you that I would like to connect with today in my role as a UUA trustee.”

(2 min)

*2. Next I would like you to think about who speaks for your congregation. Think for a minute about who that is, whether it is in your by-laws, or how it just happens in real life. **[Pause for response]** Am I talking with the right people now if I wanted your congregation to tell me what impact you wanted the UUA to be making?*

Collect: who speaks for them, whether the same or different from #1, whether or not that is who they were talking with,

(10 min)

*3. “Tell me about a time when you were part of a really healthy relationship—one in which you were nurtured and nurtured another. When you think of that relationship, what made it successful? What effect did it have on you? On others? What qualities in that particular relationship do you think could describe any successful, healthy relationship?” **(If people are stuck, the Trustee might prompt with values-based terms: trust, cooperation, respect....)***

2 min to think about relationship

8 min for people on call to describe it

Collect: values that describe healthy relationship

*The important relationships you have just shared with me are based in strong values and loving commitments. I have heard you say that a healthy relationship is **[repeat back some of the values you have heard from the input, for instance, “trusting, respectful, open,” etc]** Another important relationship is between the UUA Board and each Member Congregation. We are not just an organization. We are a religious movement, with religious values. It is important that our relationships have some of the qualities you have described in your other relationships. This conversation is the beginning to us figuring out, together, how we might do that.*

(10 min)

4. *“A relationship between individuals is one thing; a relationship between groups is another. Think about a time when your congregation was in a healthy relationship with another organization—another congregation or an organization in the community, for instance. Between these organizations, what did this healthy relationship look like?”* **[Pause. Ask them to think about a time, and then choose one among themselves. Or, if they can’t think of a time: “Maybe this will help: tell me about a time, in your congregation, when one group was in “right relationship” with another group; what happened?”]**

2 min to think about time

2 min for the group to decide which example to use

5 min to describe it

“What are some of the words you would use to describe this?”

Collect: quotes on “right relationship”, input into text boxes on survey

(2 min)

5. *“What are some of the most important differences you think Unitarian Universalism should make in the world?”* **[Pause for answer and explore]**

Collect: map to the outcomes checklist , add anything not included

(2 min)

[Choose the most inspirational example from the list in #5]

6. *“Put yourself ahead 5 years, and assume that [the most inspirational example from #5] has happened across the United States largely because of what the Unitarian Universalist Association had done [elaborate]. How would you feel about being part of this Association?”*

Collect: quotes about how they would feel being part of this Association input into text boxes

(5 min)

7. *“What would it look like if your congregation were in a healthy relationship with that UUA of the future?”*

Collect: quotes about being in “right relationship” with the UUA input into text boxes

(5 min)

8. *“What can you and I do today to ensure that your congregation and the UUA Board is in a healthy relationship 5 years from now – and today?”*

Collect: quotes about what we can do today, input into a checklist online, adding any not covered

(2 min)

9. **Thank them for their time and input – ask for a word or phrase that captures how they are feeling at the moment.**

Collect: words and phrases