

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

- 450 people participated in UU University in Portland, 50 more than participated in the first UU University in St. Louis. By the time of the October UUA Board meeting, a two-hour DVD will be available summarizing key aspects of the keynote presentation by Gil Rendle. Nearly half of the UUA district staff members were involved in some aspect of UUU, with the Rev. Terasa Cooley as its "dean".
- The Ideas for Growth DVD created for UUU in 2006 by the Jefferson Unitarian Church in Golden, Colorado recently sold out and is in a second phase of production with 4,000 copies now available.
- Exhibiting the kind of covenantal partnership described as ideal in conversations of the Congregations Come First (CCF) task force, four districts (Metro New York, Joseph Priestley, St. Lawrence, and Ohio-Meadville) created the Unitarian Universalist Leadership Team Institute (UULTI). Last July they led 85 participants in an exploration of the values and stories of our faith and our commitment to justice. They asked participants, which included ministers, district personnel, RE personnel, administrators, church staff and lay leaders, to explore how their own faith and actions inform and deepen their individual leadership, their work in growing their congregations and communities, their justice-making and outreach efforts and their commitment to families and children and to a multi-cultural world of Beloved Community.
- In that same spirit, four New England districts of Ballou Channing, Clara Barton, Mass Bay, and the currently consolidating districts of NH-VT and Northeast have organized a conference designed for ministers and lay leaders alike entitled, Ministry Matters: Strengthening Lay & Professional Leadership. The UU Ministers Association President and the UUA Moderator will be keynote speakers at the late October event.

- The Drive Time Essays series, designed to be listened to at home or in a car, will continue with Volume 3 being created this year. The focus will be on the unique challenges and opportunities of small congregations.
- The UUAs Growth Team, consisting of ten members including three district staff members, is sponsoring a Growth Consultation in November. Twelve ministers from some of the fastest-growing UU congregation in the country are spending 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  days sharing ideas about what has contributed to their growth and exploring how they, the UUA staff, and others can partner to help other congregations grow in depth and in numbers.
- A DVD entitled, *Ideas for Governance* is in the works, designed to assist congregations interested in exploring the right model of governance for its purpose. Dan Hotchkiss of the Alban Institute is likely to play a part in the creation of this DVD.
- The UUAs Growth Team will select the 2008 Breakthrough Congregations this fall. They will be highlighted at the 2008 General Assembly in Ft. Lauderdale.

Selected highlights of other interesting activities going on in our districts include:

### **New Hampshire/Vermont and Northeast Districts**

This newly forming district was one of a limited number chosen by Congregational Services to participate in a pilot project. In conjunction with a Planning for Growth consultant and the Small Church Specialist, up to twelve small congregations will participate in a three year project for growth.

### **Thomas Jefferson District**

- On the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, eleven people from the TJD, including District Executive Annette Marquis, District President Myrtle

Hepler, and UUA Trustee Anna Olsen spent a week working with the UUA/UUSC Gulf Coast Volunteer Program in New Orleans's 9<sup>th</sup> Ward repairing houses and offering support to those residents who are trying to return home. The team also included two other district board members, the district Finance Chair, two ministers, and three congregational leaders. Based on their experience, the TJD is planning two additional trips in the next year, including a trip for the third anniversary in August 2008.

- The Thomas Jefferson District will be offering its 2007 Fall Leadership Conference in three locations around the district this year, Richmond, Virginia, Knoxville, TN, and Savannah, GA. Congregational teams have been invited to attend one of the three conferences, entitled Transformational Stewardship. The Reverends Jeanne Pupke and Cecilia Kingman-Miller, who taught the stewardship track at the 2006 UU University, are offering this in-depth exploration of stewardship ministry.
- In August, 2007, thirteen of the TJD small congregations sent teams to participate in a two day training on governance offered by District Executive Annette Marquis in Greenville, NC. This was the first opportunity for many participants to learn about the role of boards and their responsibilities as board members. Response to the training was very positive and it will be offered again in different parts of the district.

### **Southwestern UU Conference**

- Louisiana congregations have responded to judicial institutional racism evident in the "Jena Six" trials going on in Jena, LA. This case has received international attention including a BBC documentary "Race Hate in Louisiana." All Souls UU Church of Shreveport, LA and the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge passed resolutions regarding the case. UUs working with the Southern Poverty Law Center have been instrumental in seeking legal representation for the defendants being tried as adults, and a member of All Souls UU Church of Shreveport is serving as counsel

for the defendant who is a juvenile. These congregations have worked to raise public awareness of the case and been supported by other UUs throughout the district in letter writing campaigns to local media. Clergy and members from All Souls, Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge, North Shore UU Society of Lacombe, LA, and Community Church UU of Metairie, LA attended a national rally in this central Louisiana town.

### **Pacific Northwest District**

- The UU Congregation of Whidbey Island (WA) has received a \$25,000 First Home Grant from the UUA, plus a \$250,000 loan to assist in their new building effort. A groundbreaking ceremony took place Sunday, September 9 after their ingathering service.
- After a year-long fundraising effort, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis (OR) sent a group of youth and adults to Costa Rica for a cultural exchange and work party.
- Saltwater UU Church (Des Moines, WA) is on the air! After filming their worship service and editing it, it is then shown on their local Channel 77 (2nd and 4th Sundays at 9:00 pm.) It can be watched on the internet at [www.pugetsoundaccess.org](http://www.pugetsoundaccess.org).
- The Rogue Valley UU Fellowship (Ashland, OR) made the front page of the local news for their "Environmental Sunday." People from 5-85 years old rode in the electric car and electric pickup after the service. Two families came to church for the first time because their elementary children saw the story in the paper and insisted that their parents bring them. Their Religious Education program was also represented at the Ashland Earth Day Fair.

- Last year was a record-breaker for the District's Chalice Lighter program. The three calls were answered with a combined total of \$47,000. The purpose of the first call, in fall 2006, was to raise at least \$12,000 so that \$200 would be available for every congregation who wanted to send a youth to General Assembly (GA) in Portland could apply for funds to do so. This call raised nearly \$15,000 from 752 donations; 26 congregations applied for funds, resulting in grants for 89 youth from around the District to attend GA.
- Youth Chaplaincy Training , at the East Shore Unitarian Church in Bellevue, WA the weekend of August 24 trained youth and adults how to tend to the spiritual and pastoral care of youth. Trainers from the UUA will lead a 15-hour intense workshop that is part of the UUA's Chrysalis Program for youth ministry. We have been lucky to have an outstanding Chaplain Team serving every Youth Con this year. They each have attended this training. As of mid-August, 16 youth and adults from 11 congregations had signed up to attend.

#### **Prairie Star District:**

- Two PSD ministers were ready and willing to conduct the first same sex marriages in Iowa when a Polk County judge declared the state law unconstitutional. Rev. Mark Stringer of First Unitarian Church of Des Moines and Rev. Brian Eslinger of the UU Fellowship of Ames both officiated at marriages over Labor Day weekend. Mark's photo and a story about the wedding were featured in the New York Times on September 1, and Brian was featured in a supportive Des Moines Register editorial later that week.
- PSD staff members are offering two online workshops to help congregations get ready for the advertising campaign this fall. The workshop is called "Now Is the Time: Top 10 Things You Can Do Now to Get Ready for Newcomers" and will feature resources available on the UUA's Web site. We will be assessing this new use of technology in preparation for using it for other future workshops in this 452,000-square-mile District.

- Two new videos, featuring stories from UU history, have been created by our Heritage and Archives Committee. The first one, *Heritage of Heresy: Universalist Pioneers on the Prairie*, tells the story of a Universalist minister who underwent a heresy trial in the 1800s in Minneapolis. These videos will be made available soon to UU congregations for their use in New UU programs and UU heritage classes. This project was funded with a grant from Prairie Star District. The Committee has received an additional grant from the UU Funding Panel to offer two workshops this fall to congregations, to encourage them to produce videos of stories from their own history.

### **Pacific Central District**

By the time the UUA Board meets, the Pacific Central District will be well into the marketing campaign in the San Francisco Bay Area. This campaign differs from earlier ones in some interesting respects, one of which was the active role played by the District.

- The PCD formed a strong partnership with the Stewardship and Development Department, allowing us to open the fundraising to the members and friends of all 17 congregations that signed on to this campaign.
- The District helped get the congregations ready for the campaign by running four Hospitality Workshops, allowing over 120 people to participate in creating action plans to "get ready for company."
- Noting that the marketing campaign won't bring visitors to the doors...but rather to the websites, the district conducted a workshop on how to make websites "visitor friendly." Led by a professional who specializes in the content rather than the technology of websites, participants learned how to use words and images in a highly skillful way. No more photos of empty sanctuaries! Since the web workshop, nine of 17 congregations in the district have significantly upgraded their websites.
- The district has put significant effort into preparing the congregations to track their visitors and returning visitors. A specific person has been assigned the task of tracking numbers in each

- congregation. Numbers will be posted weekly on the district web site, creating incentives to keep reporting the numbers.
- A cross-congregational group of guerrilla marketing folks have been working for months to fill in the smaller niche marketing slots. With the guidance of UUA Marketing Director Valerie Holton, and under the leadership of the PCDs new UUA Trustee, Linda Laskowski, the group has prepared ads for special interest, local, publications, aimed at environmentalists, parents, and the LGBT and Spanish-speaking communities. Over 100 press releases to the community newspapers have been sent.
  - The Growth Committee awarded special marketing grants to three "commuter congregations," congregations outside of the campaign who have potential members in their communities who regularly commute in and out of the Bay Area, and will be exposed to most of the campaign outside of the direct mail pieces.
  - The PCD acknowledges that much of the credit for the success has been the UUA partners, most especially Emily Sullins and Valerie Holton.

### **Ohio-Meadville District**

- The Ohio-Meadville annual Summer Institute is a week-long multigenerational summer camp experience for adults, young adults, youth and children. In recent years, it has grown quickly, doubling in size since 2001. Its July 2007 session, held at Kenyon College in Gambier, OH, welcomed over 600 participants who gathered to work on community building and faith development in the OMD. This is by far the largest single event in the Ohio-Meadville District. The Summer Institute and the District staff have also formed a new and improved partnership in planning for upcoming Summer Institutes.
- In April 2007, the Ohio-Meadville District revisioned its annual meeting, which had formerly focused almost exclusively on district business concerns. It was restructured as an inclusive District Assembly with a broad range of programs and offerings in addition to work with district business affairs. The keynote was an address by Fred Garcia: Public

Witness and the Language of Religion. Worship was offered by young adults. Congregational presidents met together. And a series of workshops were held that had been developed from requests from throughout the district. It has been estimated that attendance increased by nearly 1/3.

- In Sept. 2007, the OMD began a new Resource Development Team, that includes non-profit fund raising and investment professionals, ministers, and lay leaders with fund raising backgrounds. This new team has been charged to revive the OMD's inactive Chalice Lighters and Friends of the OMD programs, educate congregations about the importance of district dues and APF Fair Share, and seek new sources of support for the OMD's youth and young adult programming. The district already has three new Chalice Lighter proposals after having none for the past 2 years and membership is increasing.
- The Erie-Meadville cluster (five congregations in north-western PA and NY) held their first a multiple-church worship service and picnic on the shores of Lake Erie on Sept. 26. Joan Van Becelaere preached (on the beach) with a focus on the upcoming Association Sunday.

### **Florida District**

- Excitement is high in the FLD with the advent of the UUA marketing campaign for Tampa Bay. Ten congregations are expected to participate. Tampa Bay is the energy center for Florida and bodes well for a successful campaign.
- As part of that effort, the FLD Western Cluster hosts a "best practices" workshop November 3rd. This will follow three additional growth workshops taking place around the state this fall.

### **Mountain Desert District**

- MDD hosted a national Leadership School for religious educators in August. Twenty religious educators from 6 districts across the country gathered in Colorado Springs, CO to enjoy the mountain beauty and



collegial support. A rich curriculum on leadership, theology, group process and personal reflection was offered didactically and experientially. Dr. Helen Bishop was the dean and primary presenter. A number of MDD religious educators are pursuing a religious education credential as a result of this experience.

- As a result of receiving a UUFP grant for Cluster Development earlier in the year the district has been able to support excellent programs in a number of clusters across the district. Healthy Congregations has been offered in Southern Colorado and Mountain Clusters. The Border Cluster hosted Richard Gilbert presenting on the Rochester model. The Rio Grande Cluster enjoyed a workshop on Radical Hospitality presented by Dori Davenport. The Idaho-Utah Cluster will offer Healthy Congregations in mid-September. In early November Jefferson Unitarian Church is sponsoring a pastoral care conference for the four clusters in northern Colorado and southern Wyoming. Each cluster received modest, though important financial assistance with the programs. Additionally, the district received an in-kind gift of 10 Logitech QuickCams to facilitate face to face communication between congregations and district staff across the vast geography of MDD.