

October 11, 2013

Jim Key  
UUA Moderator  
Chief Governance Officer

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### Report to the UUA Board of Trustees

Since being elected to serve as your Moderator on June 22, I have been busy meeting with many people and organizations about their hopes and dreams for our movement. It has been deeply rewarding. However, I have had a few meetings where I've heard stories in which we didn't live up to our covenant with one another. Additionally, I have some references I recommend you read as we continue to develop our board culture begun at our Board Retreat in September.

I call your attention to several significant items iterated further below.

I had the privilege of worshipping at All Souls Unitarian in Washington, DC during their celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary March on Washington. The sermon Rob Hardies delivered on August 24 is a call to all of us in leadership.

The boards and staff of the four districts of the Southern Region met at the Mountain Retreat and Leadership Center near Highlands, NC, September 27 – 29. It was a incredible weekend of deep reflection and the Southern Region leadership team continues to transform governance on behalf of their over 200 congregations, to expand ministries, and to encourage cluster development. I was pleased to be a signatory to their report that is attached.

Most of my conversations and meetings have been positive and spiritually deepening, and I am positive about the future health and growth of our religious movement. However, two conversations were very troubling. They involved hearing the stories of two congregants who filed complaints of sexual misconduct by clergy in recent years and feeling they were not properly heard or respected. I will report the specifics in an executive session of the board and will request that the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and the Ministries and Faith Development staff group, in conjunction with Trustees, conduct a

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review and assessment of our current process for handling such cases. As part of the review we need to look at the intent, goals, purposes and values of the process.

I want to thank the many people who met with me, specifically Peter Morales and the UUA staff who gave me the time to provide insights into their portfolios. I offer a special shout out to Gini Courter who spent countless hours providing background and history essential to the role of Moderator.

### **Meetings with congregations**

- UU Church of Brevard (NC) – attended
- All Souls Church Unitarian (Washington, DC) – participated in the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary March on Washington
  - Hear The Rev. Dr. Robert M. Hardies [powerful sermon](#)
- UU Fellowship of Bay County (Panama City, FL) – preached
- The Unitarian Church in Westport (CT) – participated in a forum and preached
- First Church Boston – attended

### **Meetings with regions/districts**

- Southern Region Boards and Staff (The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center – NC)
  - Florida District of the UUA
  - Mid-South District of the UUA
  - Southeast District of the UUA
  - Southwestern UU Conference of the UUA
- Southern Region Mountain Meeting Report (Attachment 1)

### **Meetings with committees and organizations**

- UU Church of Nashville Safety Net (Attachment 2)
- Transgender UU Religious Professionals (TRUUST)
- Open UUA Committee
- GA Planning Committee (GAPC)
  - See Vice-Moderator's Report of meeting

- Council on Cross-Cultural Engagement (CCCE)
  - Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUM)
  - Allies for Racial Equity (ARE)
  - Unitarian Universalist Musicians' Network (UUMN)
  - Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA)
  - Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA)
  - GA Planning Committee (GAPC)
  - See Vice-Moderator's Report of meeting

### **Meetings with officers and staff**

- Peter Morales, UUA President
- Harlen Limpert, Chief Operating Officer
- Tim Brennan, Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer
- Terasa Cooley, Program and Strategy Officer
- Helene Atwan, Director, Beacon Press
- Scott Tayler, Director of Congregational Life
- Janiece Sneegas, General Assembly and Conference Services Director
- Sarah Lammert, Director of Ministries and Faith Development
- Taquiena Boston, Director of Multicultural Growth and Witness
- Terry Sweetser, Vice President for Stewardship and Development, Senior Advisor to President (Attachment 3)
- Kathleen McTeague, Director of the College of Social Justice

### **Meetings with individuals**

- Gini Courter, former UUA Moderator
- Two complainants of clergy sexual misconduct whose names will be held in confidence.

### **References for Board Development**

- [\*Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age\*](#) by Juana Bordas
- [\*Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards\*](#), by: Chait Richard, Ryan William, Taylor Barbara E.
- [\*The Gremlins of Governance\*](#), by Richard Chait
- [\*Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations: A Resource for Leaders\*](#), by Karen A. McClintock
- [\*Faith Trust Institute\*](#), founded by Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune

## Attachment 1 –Southern Region Mountain Meeting Report

Greetings,

The District Boards of the Southern Region of the UUA are in touch to share important and exciting news! This affects all congregations in our districts (Florida, Mid-South, Southeast, SWUUC), so please take a moment to review the enclosed message and share it with your congregation.

**Our Common Background and Purpose:** All four Southern Region District Boards have been working with Jim Key, UUA Moderator representing UUA Trustees, Rev. Scott Tayler, UUA Director of Congregational Life, Rev. Kenn Hurto, Executive Lead for Southern Region Staff, Southern Region Staff and each other in an intentional, covenanted and concerted effort to help congregations and leaders best serve our Unitarian Universalist faith. These groups met jointly September 27-29, 2013 at The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center (itself founded on UU principles) in North Carolina, to reaffirm the purpose of our work together and plan our path forward. This was a continuation of collaboration we started in December, 2010 when representatives from our groups met, created The Orlando Platform and then began implementing the commitments we outlined therein. At The Mountain, after deep discussion and sharing, we decided on the next steps that we would recommend our member congregations support through delegate polling at future meetings in our districts.

**Our Recommendations:** To ensure due diligence and viable implementation, the four districts in our Southern Region, jointly with administration, staff and trustees, offer the following recommendations and steps:

- Recognition that “**clusters**”, defined as a group of congregations bound together by something they hold in common, are a form of small group ministry that we and other organizations have proven to be effective in the areas of mutual support, achievement of a common goal, and sharing of best practices.
  - In our region of the UUA, clusters could be arranged by geography, a common cause, a common trait, a common leadership role or the presence of a common issue or need.
  - Some clusters already exist across our region; the intent is to use this model more intentionally and frequently to help congregations improve their effectiveness and impact. Staff and selected elders will help the intensity of progress in this area.
  
- Recognition that a strong and institutionally supported “**elderhood**” model is the best way for people who are recognized by their congregations as

leaders and stewards of our faith to serve beyond their congregational walls; "elders" will be called to (in no particular order) :

- Serve as a linkage element between congregations and UUA Trustees to ensure congregational needs are represented by UUA Trustees.
- Participate in the development and leadership of clusters.
- Work with UUA staff to help develop leaders, their skills and their impact to congregations.
- Act as an advisory body in deep partnership with Rev. Scott Tayler, Rev. Kenn Hurto, and regional staff to ensure program effectiveness and staff management.

These roles listed above arise from our recognition that congregational participation in governance functions and management of congregational services and joint ministry are two distinct ministries. We are seeking to be more intentional about how we approach this.

- The structure used currently for governance by district boards is viewed to be **too people-, process-, structure- and money intensive** to be efficient and effective.
  - All districts in our region have realized that there is truly little to govern, in part because any governance at a district or regional level would be redundant to the governance responsibilities of UUA Trustees. We are seeking to develop stronger input into these governance processes rather than duplicate them.
  - While we recommend that boards formally give up governance responsibility at the district level, there is still the need for a fiduciary body, at least at the regional level, to oversee financial and asset management matters; the scope of which needs to be determined.
  - To support the democratic representation of congregational concerns the current district structure supports, we support the maintenance of each district's identity to its current geographical alignment; we need to determine how best to do that. It is possible that a district cluster configuration, vs. a legal entity known present day as a district, might be the best vehicle for that representation; next steps include finalizing a recommendation.
- **Effective communication** will be essential to informing every one about why recommended changes are imperative and ensuring all Unitarian Universalist leaders have a way to exchange views about the challenges and solutions we are exploring.

**Our Implementation Plans:** **Due diligence** is required in several areas to further the development of elder and cluster models, to eliminate the structures no longer needed for governance and to ensure that democratic congregational representation is maintained. Toward that end, four task forces, comprised of staff and board members from each of the four Southern Region districts, have been commissioned to pursue the details associated with responsibly achieving these strategies:

- **Communication Task Force**– Develop and implement a multi-media communication approach that facilitates the sharing of information and the vehicles for open exchange of questions, suggestions, plans and expectations. Doing this well will help all congregations and their delegates prepare to vote on recommended implementation plans when that time comes.
- **Elderhood Task Force** – Further define the roles and models for the work of elders, their accountability to those they serve, and how to identify, commission, and manage them.
- **Fiduciary Task Force** – Determine the scope of financial responsibilities and assets that need oversight of a fiduciary body accountable for representing district or regional concerns. Determine which span of oversight (district, regional or UUA) is best suited to handle the identified concerns and propose the steps and model to implement. This team is responsible to understand the implications of dissolving or creating any legal entities (e.g. districts, regions or other structures) needed to best handle financial matters and oversight, while enabling structures that support governance functions we no longer need to be eliminated.
- **Democratic Process Task Force** – Ensure that democratic representation of congregations within the UUA organization remains intact or is strengthened as elderhood and cluster models are implemented and the inefficiencies associated with district structures are removed. This team will ensure that rights and obligations bestowed to congregations by the UUA bylaws are well-served.

Each task force will interact with the other task forces to ensure integrity of the transition, as each will also interact with the staff led effort to further implement the cluster model.

**Our Historical Continuity:** It's important to keep in mind that the changes and plans outlined above are truly a continuation of steps already taken to deepen,

expand and clarify our shared ministry throughout our UUA over the recent three years. To summarize, between the time of the December 2010 meeting in Orlando and the recently convened meeting at The Mountain, the following changes have occurred with our region and the UUA:

- **Staff regionalization has taken place** and a complete complement of Congregational Life Consultants are now on board, developing clusters, preparing to support a robust Elderhood model, and working to reestablish a personal relationship with each congregation in our district/region.
- We are piloting steps to facilitate that each congregation in our region has **equitable access to resources** through the consolidation of district finances into a regional financial management model and the implementation of GIFT stewardship approach (one ask per congregation for what previously was UUA dues and district dues)..
- Each district board has or is in progress of **reducing their board size** to be more actionable and effective. Each has assessed their role in governance, declaring it no longer relevant. Each developed the determination to create a model that enables the time lay leaders invest supporting our faith to be more meaningful than governance or oversight roles tend to be; hence their passionate advocacy for the elder and cluster model development described above.
- Each district **adopted the UUA Ends** as their common focus and committed their alignment to support those ends in covenant with UUA Administration and staff and UUA Trustees. Such action facilitated increased collaboration and alignment of the four districts to further the purpose of the UUA and its member congregations, leading to the joint passion and enthusiasm for the recommendations and transition plans we promised to implement.

**Our Commitment, Our Passion:** The benefits of our recommendations won't immediately be clear to all involved. Some congregations are seeing benefits from early implementation items. While for others; experiencing benefits will take more time. Over the next few months, you can expect to see more communication about what's happening, attend webinars to get more information, engage in discussions to exchange views and determine what you can contribute to make transformation happen.

Our UUA Moderator, Jim Key, and our new UUA Director of Congregational Life, Rev. Scott Tayler, join each district of the Southern Region in a belief that the next steps of our journey will truly be transformational. We look forward to sharing more over the coming months and engaging with you to make your congregation more vibrant

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and our UUA faith more relevant. We are a life changing faith and we are moving forward to bring more peace, love and justice to our world.

To our faith,

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## Attachment 2 – Letter from First UU Church of Nashville Safety Net

Dear Jim,

Thank you so much for signing our petition and your support of UU Safety Net. We know that this is very difficult work and are deeply grateful for the courage and leadership you have demonstrated just a few months into your tenure as Moderator.

Please know that each of us is happy to support you in any way possible. We have quite a few areas of expertise.

<Names redacted>

Attached are the lists of petition comments and signatures. We would be most grateful if you would forward these to the rest of the Board.

Please let us know how we can help the Board and the UUA. We believe the next step is the national conversation and would be delighted to help you in this work.

In faith,

<Names redacted>

## The Petition on MoveOn.org by Safety Net

Letter: Greetings,

For some years now, Unitarian Universalists have been concerned about and engaged in questions regarding growth. How are we going to grow our congregations (and beyond)? What are the best strategies for programming and governance that will lead to growth? What message and image must we project if we want to grow?

We, the undersigned, are also concerned about growth. And we are convinced that a great many of our congregations experience obstacles to growth because of one under-appreciated and rarely-discussed factor: the systemic damage done by clergy misconduct.

Unitarian Universalists are preparing to meet in Louisville for General Assembly in June 2013, where we will gather under a theme of “from promise to commitment.” This theme, while admirable in many respects, has served to underscore the pain

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of those who have gone unheard and un-cared for in the wake of clergy misconduct. It is time that the promises of our association to victims of misconduct and the congregational systems devastated by its corrosive force are remembered and finally fulfilled.

Over a decade ago, at the 2000 General Assembly in Nashville, UUA Executive Vice President Kay Montgomery offered an apology to victims of misconduct. Anticipating the report of the staff-appointed Safe Congregation Panel (SCP), she said at the time:

"Let me say this as simply and unequivocally as I know how: the Association has largely failed the people most hurt by sexual misconduct, the victims and survivors.

Other denominations have done better. These brave and bruised people have, more often than not I suspect, been left lonely, confused, afraid, angry and betrayed. Un-ministered to. What I feel about this is not so much guilt, I guess, as great sorrow and regret. I am profoundly sorry. And I pledge that this gap, this failure, will be remedied."

This apology was received as a balm for broken spirits, a salve for wounded souls who finally felt seen, heard, and understood by UUA leadership. The importance of this moment cannot be understated. Nor can it be understated how painful, distressing and re-traumatizing the subsequent 13 years of near-silence on some of the key issues involved have been for many of those same people, as well as for our congregations struggling with histories of misconduct.

To be fair, since 2000 the UUA staff has made clear and discernible progress toward addressing some of the structural concerns with the way the Association handles complaints of misconduct. But it has fallen well short of the promised goal of ministering to victims, and it has been negligent in addressing the systemic effects of misconduct in our congregations. In fact, we are more than 10 years past the recommended final report to the General Assembly describing the implementation of the SCP recommendations, and yet over the years inquiries about complainant-focused recommendations have been met with excuses, dismissal, outright hostility and, worst of all, silence.

It is this silence which leaves us with no other conclusion than to assume that we lack a system of accountability that assures action on the complainant-focused recommendations of the SCP. We are long past the time when silence was an acceptable response to the fact of ministerial misconduct. We know that continued silence perpetuates the abuse and makes it all but impossible for successive ministries to thrive in congregations where trust has been shattered by misconduct. If we want a growth strategy, we feel there's no better place to start than by addressing the legacies of misconduct in our congregations.

Kay's apology is a public document, available for all to read on the UUA website

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along with the report of the SCP. That it remains an unfulfilled promise is an embarrassment for an institution which strives so diligently to be a voice for restorative justice to the world. How can we be so fixated on “Standing on the Side of Love” when our continuing institutional silence for victims of misconduct is anything but?

And so we, the undersigned, ask you, the candidates for UUA Moderator and Board of Trustees, to publicly indicate your willingness to start a new national conversation on clergy misconduct in the UUA, and to ensure that survivors of misconduct have a real voice in that conversation. We ask you to commit to using the powers of the Board to take ownership of the recommendations of the Safe Congregation Panel, to update them as needed, and to hold the staff accountable for implementing them fully. And we ask you to investigate the accountability relationship between the Board and Ministerial Fellowship Committee, with an eye toward balancing the need to protect institutional interests with a pastoral responsibility to care for victims of misconduct.

Like President Peter Morales, we believe that Unitarian Universalism can be a faith for the 21st century. But it will never be such unless it reckons honestly with the damage done by those in positions of trust, power, and authority that is just as much a part of our heritage as are our beloved Principles and Purposes. We look forward to a new day of sunlight and transparency that you will usher in with your bold and courageous leadership, and we stand ready to companion you on this journey of unabashed faith in all-encompassing love.

Sincerely,  
(the undersigned)

### Resources:

Kay Montgomery's apology to victims of misconduct (2000):  
<http://uua.org/safe/misconduct/restorative/23865.shtml>

Recommendations of the Safe Congregation Panel (2001):  
<http://uua.org/safe/misconduct/restorative/index.shtml>

Update (2006) on implementation of SCP recommendations:  
[http://uua.org/documents/congservices/safecongs/0601\\_restorative\\_recs.pdf](http://uua.org/documents/congservices/safecongs/0601_restorative_recs.pdf)

Current UUA process for handling complaints of misconduct:  
<http://uua.org/safe/misconduct/index.shtml>

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Attachment 3 – Letter from Terry Sweetser

October 9, 2013

Dear Jim,

Thank you for your support and guidance of the Unitarian Universalist Association's "Light a Flame" campaign. As you know, this is a comprehensive campaign: we plan to incorporate all of the different funding areas of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) into it, including the Annual Program Fund, Friends of the UUA, major gifts, legacy gifts, and foundation support. We plan to launch our "Light a Flame" campaign at General Assembly 2015 in Portland, OR.

We have also engaged in a partnership with five other UU institutions to create a "collaborative campaign," which we hope will maximize giving to Unitarian Universalism as a whole, as well as to each individual institution. Leaders from the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, Meadville Lombard Theological School, the Church of the Larger Fellowship, Starr King School for the Ministry, and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association met in June, July, and September to discuss the goals for each of our individual campaigns, find shared themes, and consider a cohesive strategy for approaching major donors. We have agreed on new ways to be in partnership about our larger goals, as well as in our communication with individual donors. The governing boards of each institution may consider a vote to endorse the idea of a "collaborative campaign."

We plan to create a collaborative steering committee comprised of two volunteers and a staff member from each institution to meet regularly about the broad messages of the campaigns. We will celebrate the public launch the collaborative campaign at General Assembly 2015. At that point, we hope that each institution will have raised approximately 50% of their total financial goal during a "silent phase." This collaborative campaign is a way to bring different aspects of our faith movement together, which has been a goal for many of our major donors and supporters like the UU Veatch Program at Shelter Rock.

The UUA's own "Light a Flame" campaign will encourage people to "Light a Flame for Social Justice," "Light a Flame for Outreach," and "Light a Flame for Religious Community" with their support. We recently met with our campaign Steering Committee which encouraged us to focus our vision and answer the question: Why us? And why now?

We are grateful for the support that you, the Board, and the UUA administration have provided in this process of developing the UUA's comprehensive campaign. I know that we can grow together and "light a flame" for an amazing future of Unitarian Universalism.

In faith,



Rev. Terry Sweetser  
Vice President for Stewardship and Development