



UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION

Unitarian Universalist Association Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2016

Annual Report 2016

The Unitarian Universalist Association will **Connect, Lead, and Act** to live our values out loud. We understand the changing religious culture and we are adapting to be the spiritual home that people seek today. We are a community of love, justice, and passion. Unitarian Universalism is everywhere: in a group of 200 at church, in a community of 10 online, or in the hopes of one heart.

CONNECT

The UUA must support our congregations in ways that deepen spiritual community and allow for successful innovation and outreach. Congregations are our foundation. Innovative faith communities are a bold next step. The UUA, as the hub for our faith, must be relentlessly useful: making connections, facilitating learning, and encouraging risk taking.

LEAD

Unleashing the skills and passions of our people as leaders through training, mentoring, and collaboration is essential to our future. The UUA will create new opportunities for learning. Excellent leadership requires collaboration with a dose of creativity. The UUA is positioned to facilitate partnerships with religious progressives.

ACT

We have a proud history of justice work. We evolve as the moral issues of the day emerge. We counter violence with peaceful protest, and regressive legislation with thoughtful advocacy. Our principles propel us to stand on the side of love and advocate for equality, peace, and justice.

Life's calling. Since 1961, and with the strength of our 1,046 congregations, the Unitarian Universalist Association is answering. We are so grateful that the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock is our partner in this important work. Thank you.





Connect

Connect to nurture souls, build community, and honor the sacred...

For many Unitarian Universalists, our congregations are a spiritual home: a place of worship and community. Increasingly, UUs are creating new ways to gather and express our faith within and beyond congregations—in multisite congregations, online discussion groups, music and worship circles, intentional living communities, artist communities with purpose, and more. The UUA reaches out to those seeking a religious home in community, both online and in person. In community, we realize our potential.

OUTREACH

Religious participation in America is declining. We cannot count on potential members seeking us out like they did 30 years ago. We must meet people where they are, beyond our four walls and into the streets and the parks and the virtual highways. Outreach allows us to get to know the people who would want to join our faith movement, to hear their stories and pay attention to their lived experience, rather than our own assumptions. The mission of the UUA Outreach Office is to help more people build the first stages of relationship

with Unitarian Universalism. We must reach out to thrive as a faith. The foundation of our outreach work starts with branding and design standards for the UUA, as well as outreach tools for UU groups and congregations. The best expression of our brand identity is the updated uua.org, a web platform designed for a 21st century organization. Since the launch of the new site in February, 2015, the number of web users is up 10% to over 1.1 million per year. New features allow users to create their own accounts, through which they can bookmark and comment on pages so uua.org can be tailored for each visitor.

Last year, the Outreach Office supported 30 congregations as they beta-tested their own outreach work. The results inspired us to partner with the Standing on the Side of Love (SSL) campaign and local congregations to promote outreach programs to targeted audiences, specifically young progressive activists.

Working with a cross-congregational steering team in Philadelphia, programs focused on racial justice succeeded in attracting a younger audience. As proposed, this approach demonstrated a low-cost and replicable model for successful young adult outreach. However, the staff time required to run the program was more than anticipated, so the Outreach Office decided to focus on lessons learned from this program.

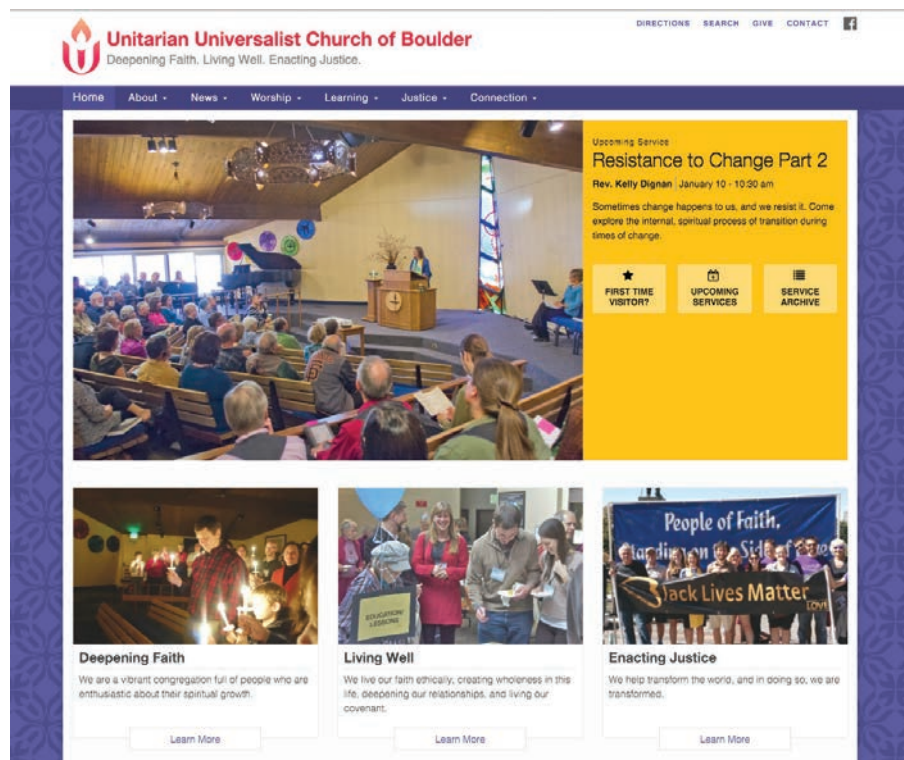
Beta-testing results informed creation of a congregational website template tailored to the unique needs of UU congregations. In the first three months, the template was downloaded 340 times, demonstrating the value of the UUA offering this kind of technical tool.

EMERGING MINISTRIES AND COVENANTING COMMUNITIES

Emerging Ministries are new groups or projects that are grounded in Unitarian Universalism

and bring people together. They currently comprise nearly 20 multi-site congregations; 60 Emerging Congregations, new congregations that are working towards becoming members of the UUA; plus numerous other types of communities including meeting groups, campus ministries, and missional communities.

To support our relationship with Emerging Ministries, this year the UUA Board created an official “Covenanting Communities” designation for groups. As people imagine new ways of living out their UU faith, they will be recognized as part of the UU family. Covenanting Communities claim UU principles and advance UU values and further the goal of growing our faith.



Congregational website template

Other new outreach tools include an email marketing service, revised brochures at the UUA bookstore, and a new outreach study guide for congregations. The UU conversation on outreach has grown more sophisticated, showing that more and more UUs are learning how to reach out and spread UU values in the world.

In 2014 and 2015, the UUA implemented a pilot program with UU emerging groups to explore ways to create a more formal relationship. The UUA's Congregational Life staff learned what is important to uphold, including connection to UU principles and the wider movement; and what is appropriate to leave to full-fledged congregations such as bylaws, voting at General Assembly, and size requirements.

The best part about the Covenanting Communities status is that they become a part of an entire system of support for emerging ministries. They receive online resources for spiritual exploration; recognition at General Assembly; access to UUA opportunities like trainings, consultations, and grants, and UUA insurance plans; and the opportunity to connect with peer communities.

The first eight official Covenanting Communities were recognized at General Assembly (GA) 2015. They include Sacred Path, a group in Indianapolis, IN, committed to intergenerational worship and service; and the Lucy Stone Cooperative in Boston, MA, an intentional living community grounded in UU values.

Being in relationship with a number of different types of communities has shown us that not all projects will succeed as originally intended, but valuable lessons can be learned from experimentation.

The Beloved Café project in San Francisco began from an idea to create a “third space” between work and home where spiritual community is formed in a variety of ways at a working coffee shop. Due to limitations in time and capital, the café did not come to fruition. It did, however, allow leaders to have a part in shaping our conversations about emerging ministries and impacting how we think about what is necessary to be successful in future projects.

The UUA is developing resources and learning communities to support these groups. A special “lab” at General Assembly 2015 gave Emerging Ministry group leaders the opportunity to have consultations with experts in such areas as legal concerns, outreach, membership integration, stewardship, and identity formation.



Sacred Path, a Covenanting Community

DEMOGRAPHICS

The UUA is committed to multiculturalism and diversity at all levels. We have been leaders and allies for economic justice, LGBT justice, racial justice, and more for decades.

Our Board of Trustees includes eleven men and four women. Of the eleven people who reported their race, two are of African descent, one is Latino/Hispanic, and eight are white. Of the ten people who reported their sexual identity, two identify as queer, one as gay, one as bisexual, and six as straight.

Women comprise 68% of the UUA's staff of 213 people. 80% identify as white, 10% identify as African American, and 4% as two or more races, 3% as Asian, 2% as Latino/Hispanic, and 1% as Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

The UUA does not collect demographic information from congregations, but the *UU World* magazine Print Reader Survey from 2013 provides a fair representation of membership. Almost 75% of readers who responded to the survey are over 55 years old. The average age is 61.3. One in five households includes children under age 18. 87% percent identify as straight; 6% are lesbian or gay; 4% are bisexual. 98% are white. 63% of our readers have completed a graduate or professional degree. 43% are retired, 36% work full-time. The most commonly mentioned occupational fields are education, healthcare, or legal.

While we are proud of the diversity in our staff and our congregations, we continue to strive to create inclusive spaces for individuals across age, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. Our strength comes from the myriad of voices that join to make our movement possible.



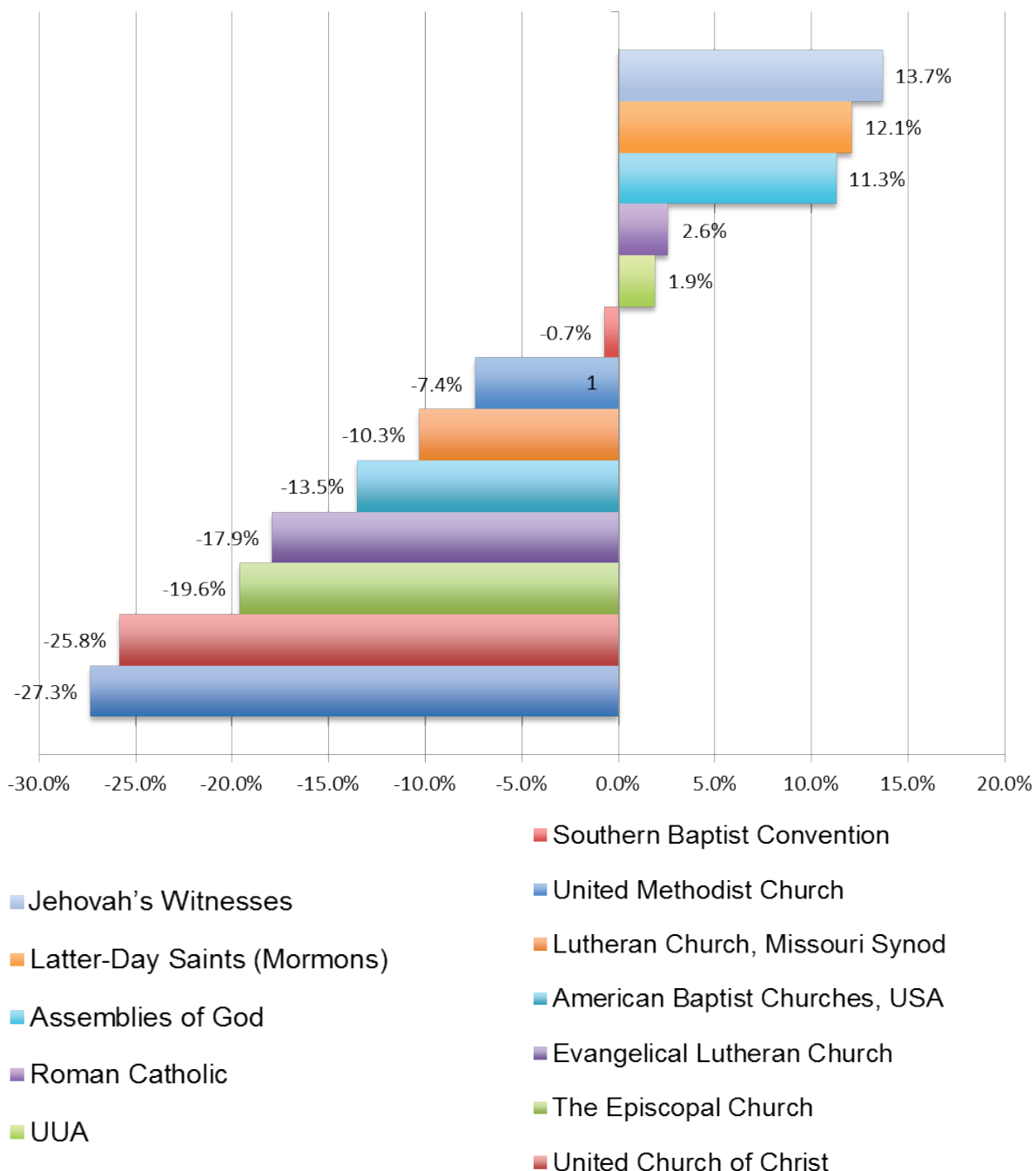
UUA Staff in 24 Farnsworth Headquarters

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST GROWTH AND MEMBERSHIP

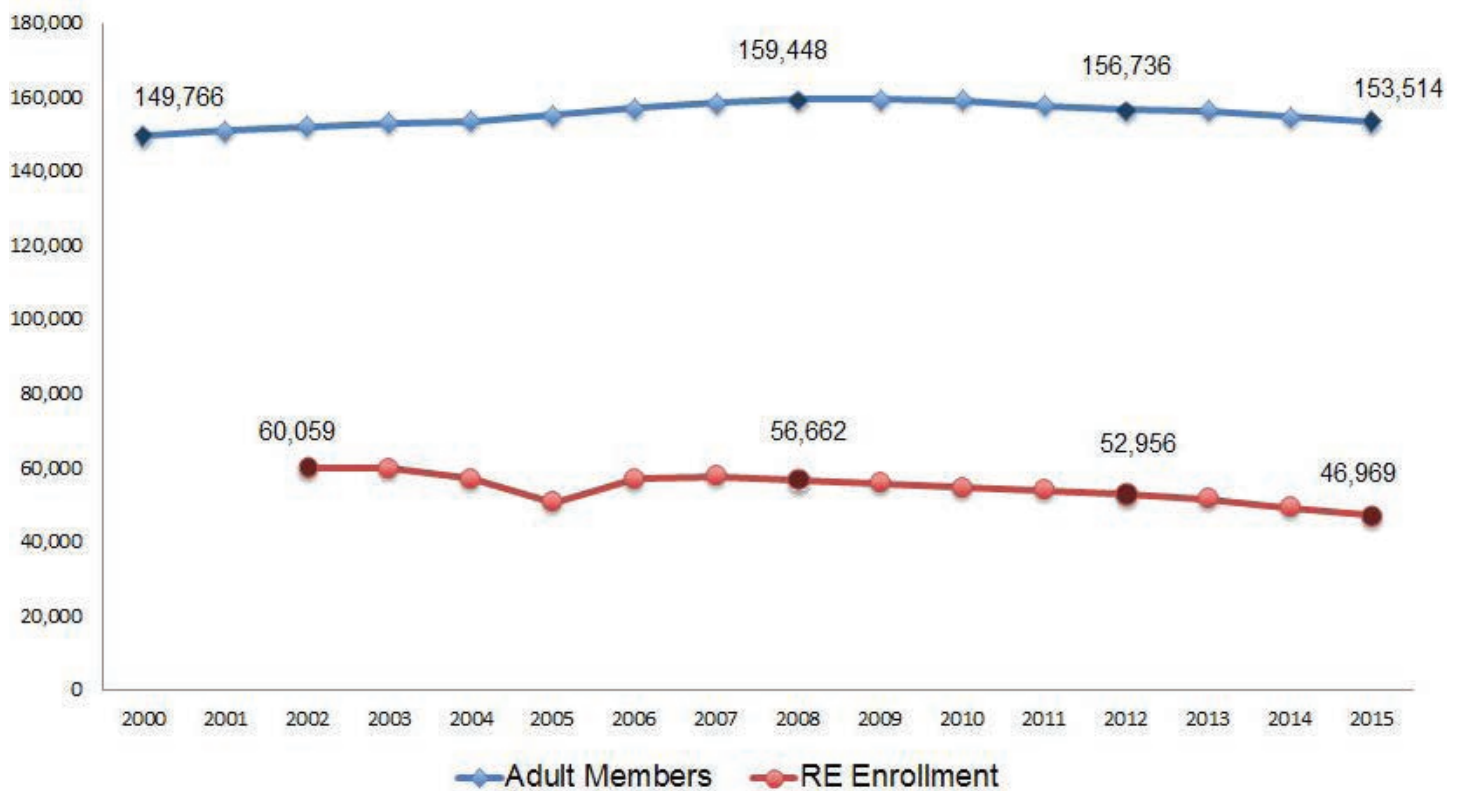
It is widely publicized that involvement in traditional religion is diminishing and membership in most denominations is falling. Unitarian Universalists can be proud that our relevant

messages and our unique expressions of spirituality have helped us maintain a fairly steady level of membership for decades. The number of congregations has grown slightly. In spring 2015, the UUA comprised 1,043 congregations, up from 1,033 in 2004.

National Council of Churches Membership Data Eight Year Change by Percentage 2004-2012



Adult Membership and Religious Education Enrollment 2000-2015 Trends



As shown in blue line of the graph above, adult membership within congregations has been relatively steady in past 15 years, with over 153,000 certified members in 2015. In addition to attempting to grow membership, the UUA has encouraged congregations to think about the value and scope of their service to people in their local communities. Sunday service visitors, concert or lecture attendees, social justice project volunteers, and so many more are touched by the diverse programs of the congregation. The reach of each UU congregation is likely significantly higher the actual number of members.

The slight decline in enrollment in religious education is shown in the red line and the UUA will continue to analyze this change with Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) and Congregational Life staff.

The UUA and congregations are known for innovative Owl Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality curriculum, as well as age-appropriate material on topics from views of God to family relationships, and resources from chalice lighting words to educational games for preschoolers. Much of this information is provided for free on Worship Web, as well as through books and workshops.

COLLABORATIONS

The UUA's most frequent and long-standing collaborations are with our congregations. All of our work as an Association is in concert with the needs of our congregations. We work with congregations to ensure they have support whether they are finding a minister, looking for creative first grade curriculum, or helping a member to make a stock gift to help save their church's beloved weather vane. Our congregations in turn help us test many of our new programs; they help each other learn by sharing stories of outreach; they help their communities by standing at the front lines of local injustice. The UUA would be nothing without its congregations. We do all that we can to support their presence not just in their communities, but in the lives of each and every person who consider Unitarian Universalism their spiritual home.

The UUA, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), Meadville Lombard Theological School (MLTS), Starr King School for the Ministry (SKSM), Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF), and

UU Ministers Association (UUMA) have come together to create Wake Now Our Vision: The Unitarian Universalist Collaborative Campaign. Wake Now Our Vision is rooted in the belief that these six organizations are equipped to meet the needs of our world and bring Unitarian Universalism into its next stage of growth and outreach together. The Collaborative Campaign will center around the versatility and power of planned giving, partnering with congregations in this transformative work of legacy and innovation. Led by educators and planned giving professionals from the participating organizations, workshops will focus on the exciting potential of the Campaign, the tools of planned giving, and our shared vision for the future of Unitarian Universalism. We are grateful for the ways that the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock helped inspired this collaboration. We look forward to wherever our partnership with this congregation takes us.

We are proud of our successful collaboration with the UUSC to form the UUA/UUSC Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice (UUCSJ). UUCSJ coordinates trips for youth, young adults,



UUCSJ border trip participants praying

ministers, and seminarians to deepen the work of justice in their congregations and communities. In the past two years, 270 people participated in trips. In April and November 2015, UUCSJ offered trips with the organization BorderLinks to help participants better understand the human rights injustices involving migrants at the United States border with Mexico. Participants returned to their home communities inspired to activism for immigration reform. The UUA's SSL team, among other groups, supports these trips with spiritual and discussion resources. The 2016 schedule includes trips to Haiti, Nicaragua, Arizona, Louisiana, and other sites.

The UUA's Holdeen India program (UUHIP) provides aid for humanitarian service ventures and social enterprises that seek to advance prosperity for all of India's people. UUHIP provides support to 24 different grassroots and activist institutions in India. Their work covers the following areas: women's rights; the rights of Indigenous people; the rights of the Dalit caste; the rights of workers in the informal sectors of India's economy, and access to justice.

During the last year, the Holdeen Program has focused on providing both grant-based support to our partners and up-to-date research on policy changes in the country. Our partners have recovered millions of rupees in unpaid wages for impoverished working women and other rural laborers; they have secured the rights of indigenous communities to their ancestral lands and other natural resources; and they have engaged intensely with government departments and officials to press for accountability in the use of public funds.

All of UUHIP's partners serve as a bulwark in their communities against the exploitation and abuses that far too many Indians continue to endure.



Holdeen India Program partners

Housed at our headquarters in Boston, Beacon Press is an independent publisher of serious non-fiction. Cornel West, a Beacon Press author, was the 2015 Ware Lecturer at General Assembly. Beacon Press partners publishes authors like West who align with the UUA's values for racial justice, environmental justice, and economic justice.

Throughout this report we mention collaborations and partnerships with UUSC, UUCSJ, CLF, MLTS, SKSM, UU-UNO, and Beacon Press, which are all Veatch grantees. Currently, no member of the UUA's Board of Trustees is a UU Congregation at Shelter Rock member.

Lead

Lead to live with purpose, make positive change, and inspire others...

The UUA identifies and nurtures religious leaders. Together with our UU professional organizations for clergy, religious educators, and musicians, our seminaries, and many related organizations, we unite to create a lifelong path of learning and transformation.

SUMMER SEMINARY

Summer Seminary is a program for Unitarian Universalist youth to explore the possibility of becoming a religious professional. Focusing on ordained ministry and credentialed leadership in religious education and music, the program offers youth the opportunity to explore their call to ministry in all its forms, learn about life as a religious professional, and connect with other youth considering religious professional career paths.



Summer Seminary 2015 students

During Summer Seminary 2015, 18 youth gathered from across the nation for six days to explore their calling to religious leadership. Held at the Iliff School of Theology and in partnership with First Universalist Church in Denver, CO, Summer Seminary created space for these youth from across the nation to wrestle with the question: “What does the future hold for me?”



A Summer Seminary student preaching

Students explored their personal call and began to define what role they want to play in Unitarian Universalist ministry to the world. They played music, sang and worshipped together. They explored faith formation and innovative forms of credentialed ministry. The group visited a hospital to learn about professional chaplaincy. Thirteen religious educators, ministers, chaplains, music directors, and UUA staff led the workshops.

One of this year’s participants, Olivia, called Summer Seminary, “Life changing! I felt challenged to think about my life and the person I want to be in this world.” Benji added that Summer Seminary, “Taught me how different ministries work and helped me focus my calling and have a more precise goal for my ministry.” Melissa explained that Summer Seminary is, “Like an awakening. You get a chance to understand more than just the faith, or just the possible occupations; you get to learn about the communities built and the relationships made, and the infinite beauty that is our faith.”

The Summer Seminary connections continued past the week in Denver. In September, the Youth and Young Adult office held online conversations with the graduates and faculty about becoming a religious professional. Lively discussions pop up daily in the Facebook group. The three Summer Seminary classes of alumni and faculty will be united at a reception at the 2016 General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio.

In July, 2016, Summer Seminary will be held in Berkeley, CA, in collaboration with Starr King School for the Ministry, the Southern Region, and the Pacific Western Region. Summer Seminary has expanded to an entire week and will cover topics such as faith development, theology, spiritual practices, self-care, different forms of ministry, and leadership styles.

BEYOND THE CALL

Beyond the Call: Entrepreneurial Ministry emerged from a partnership between the UUMA and the UUA, and it is one part of the UUMA's larger continuing education initiative. This program includes 26 religious professionals in a two-year program of developing the skills needed to implement innovative initiatives. Most participants are Unitarian Universalist ministers, with the exception of five participants who are Reform rabbis or United Church of Christ ministers. The assumption is that these leaders have a lot of creative ideas, but may lack some of the skills such as design, marketing, supervision, planning, fundraising, and financial management. Thus, a key part of the design of the program is to partner with business school faculty, who focus on teaching entrepreneurial skills to make these religious leaders' visions into realities.

The program has completed a full year of its two-year schedule. In January, 2016, the program held the third five-day "intensive" meeting to discuss individual projects, learn from faculty, and connect with classmates. Students are in the process of moving from design work led by faculty of the Design School at Stanford and the Kellogg School of Northwestern University, to marketing and budgeting with faculty from Duke University.

Later in 2016, the group will hold its fourth and final intensive, with a focus on the skills of sustaining innovation financially and organizationally. Five \$10,000 startup grants will be awarded to the entrepreneurs with the most viable ideas.

A few participants' project highlights include: Rev. Elizabeth Nguyen and Rev. Heather Concannon, founders of the UU Community Cooperatives (UUC), were encouraged to apply for the Forbes Under 30 \$1 Million Change the World Competition through connections in the Beyond the Call program. Their goal is to grow a movement of cooperatively owned and governed spiritual communities, supporting people to live lives grounded in UU values. Forbes named UUC as one of six finalists out of more than 2,500 applicants and awarded them \$100,000.

The Rev. Kaaren Anderson, Senior Minister of First Unitarian Church of Rochester, NY, has a track record of innovation in ministry. Her project, The Society for Dangerous Ideas, provides edgy experiences and opportunities "to do good with or without God." By leveraging game theory, subscribers participate "in crazy-assed spiritual practices including top secret missions, performance art, rites of passage rituals, stealth guerrilla art, and a monthly change makers event."



Beyond the Call discussion with professors and business professionals

Rev. Kären Rasmussen of Virginia serves both a local UU congregation and is on the board of trustees of a non-profit that provides food for families in need in her community. She is passionate about ending childhood hunger and specifically invites and challenges communities and organizations to partner to create hunger-free zones. Her organization, No Child Goes Hungry, provides resources with the goal of ensuring that no child in that partner's circle of relationships will ever go to bed hungry.



Beyond the Call participants

Following the completion of the Beyond the Call program, it will be important to review this process and look at ways to continue spreading the skills necessary for innovation in our movement. UUA President Rev. Peter Morales says, “The goal was never to train just a couple dozen ministers; the goal has always been to spread a culture of innovation that includes not only skill development, but a community of innovators that learn from and inspire one another.”

MEDIA COVERAGE

The UUA Communications office tracks media coverage about UU congregations, organizations and our wider faith movement. On average, UUs are mentioned in the news about 30 to 50 times in a week.


Media highlights related to the 50th anniversary of the Selma civil rights march include “A Call from Selma,” a documentary by the New York Times about the experiences of UU minister Rev. Clark Olsen and the editorial “Selma: Commemoration and Commitment” by Rev. Morales in the Huffington Post.

Unitarian Universalist congregations have been active in the movement for racial justice with Black Lives Matter. In September, the Capital Gazette of Maryland featured “Standing up: Unitarian church backs Black Lives Matter,” a video and article about the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis, MD’s work to be an active voice for justice in their community.


The UU community is highly connected on social media, especially Facebook and Twitter. The UUA shares news, highlights the best work of congregations, and provides pastoral messages to almost 50,000 Facebook fans. Many posts are shared widely beyond the UU community. Top posts this past year include a pastoral message for victims of terrorist attacks in Paris in November and a prayer for refugees worldwide.

Despite our proportionally small size as a religious denomination in America, Unitarian Universalism has a wide reach and strong influence in promoting progressive values and the importance of liberal faith, in the media and in communities.

Our religious leaders are impassioned UUs who serve as a moral compass guiding our global conscience in ways large and small. UU leaders may change one life or may organize tens of thousands. Collaboration and building trust are key. At the UUA, our job is to model, inspire, recruit, equip, and finally unleash potential. Together we shape our future.


Unitarian Universalist Association
 Published by Jill Goddard [?] · November 13 at 6:35pm · 🌐

Tonight, we hold all the people in and around Paris in our hearts.
<http://bbc.in/1MsHhml>



162,404 people reached
 Boost Post

2.2k Likes · 34 Comments · 1.9k Shares

Like · Comment · Share

162,404 People Reached
 12,899 Likes, Comments & Shares

10,612 Likes	2,262 On Post	8,350 On Shares
328 Comments	37 On Post	291 On Shares
1,959 Shares	1,959 On Post	0 On Shares

5,225 Post Clicks

786 Photo Views	701 Link Clicks	3,738 Other Clicks ⓘ
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NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

67 Hide Post	22 Hide All Posts
0 Report as Spam	1 Unlike Page

UUA Facebook post honoring victims of Paris terrorists attacks in 2015

Personal Story - Jaimie Dingus

An Open Letter to UU Ministers and Religious Professionals,

Three summers ago, I had the absolute privilege of attending Summer Seminary as part of its pilot year in Boston. Summer Seminary is a program run by the UUA that brings youth together from all over the country to learn about becoming religious professionals. These youth share a passion for ministry, religious education or music ministry. Throughout the program they learn from seminary faculty, UUA staff, and current religious professionals about all the pieces that go into a life of religious service. My year, we had speakers who shared about their social justice centered UU community ministry. This showed us that ministry, even ordained ministry, could be different than the model of parish ministry the majority of us grew up with. Our guides shared their personal spiritual practices and we held space for worship and prayer. My cohort decided to wake up extra early one day, and hold a sunrise worship on the Boston Common. I remember, shivering in the morning air of the common and seeing the ducks on the pond as we sang and prayed together. It was a special moment of connection for us that we hold onto even several years later.

Summer Seminary gives our youth life-changing resources. From conversations with seminary representatives to a session with a professor of preaching, this short time together is just bursting with opportunity. But it's so much more than a series of brilliant workshops. Summer Seminary takes the youth who have just started to wonder if religious leadership might be part of their lives, and tells them that it is possible. It takes these incredible youth, who probably haven't met another young person who shares their goals, and brings them together for a week of learning and community building. Summer Seminary tells these youth that their passion for our Unitarian Universalist faith is shared by a group of peers. It tells them that it is ok to be fifteen years old and to know in your heart that you are going to spend the rest of your life loving and teaching people as a minister in our faith. Summer Seminary takes our youths' commitment to Unitarian Universalist leadership seriously.

It's an amazing program that has brought discernment and clarity into the lives of so many youth already. And it is a program that I suspect would benefit so many more youth in our denomination if they really knew about it, and felt empowered to participate. We need all of our youth leaders to know about this program. I want you to think about your youth groups and the youth in your congregations. Who do you see as being part of the next generation of UU ministers, religious educators or credentialed musicians? Seek out these youth and tell them about Summer Seminary. Tell them that you see their potential and their commitment. Tell them that you take them seriously, and that Summer Seminary is a chance to begin discerning their calling. It matters for our youth to have the leaders that we look up to personally suggest programs for us. And I promise that when you send your youth, you are going to get youth back who are brimming with enthusiasm and passion for Unitarian Universalism, who are going to continue this well into their adult lives.

Three years ago I attended Summer Seminary 2013 "The Originals." Three days ago I hit submit on my actual applications for seminary. This program really does change lives and kickstart callings. I hope you will take a little time to cultivate the future leaders of our faith by promoting Summer Seminary.

Thanks,
Jaimie Dingus
Summer Seminary Class of 2013



Act

ACT to promote justice and equity, worth and dignity, peace, and liberty...

Unitarian Universalists value equality in human relations. We must act when we see injustice. The UUA supports local, national, and global efforts to diminish injustice. We crowd-source compassion. Together we create a more just world.

STANDING ON THE SIDE LOVE

Standing on the Side of Love (SSL) is the UUA's public advocacy campaign that seeks to affirm Unitarian Universalism's message of unconditional love. During 2015, SSL capitalized on the growing momentum of Unitarian Universalists involved in organizing for racial justice around the country. This has become increasingly important as the lives and rights of people of color are threatened. Seeking out and promoting multicultural and multi-faith partnerships are key to the UUA's justice priorities.



UU churches demonstrating support for Black Lives Matter

The UUA and SSL connected with UU clergy in the St. Louis, MO, area after the murder of Michael Brown in the summer of 2014. To mark the one year anniversary of this tragedy, almost one hundred UUs gathered again for four days of witness, relationship building, and skill sharing.

A group of Black Unitarian Universalists organizing for racial justice formed the Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU). Our collaboration has included financial support for members of BLUU to attend the Movement for Black Lives Convening in July, 2015 which brought together over 1,500 Black activists. We anticipate continuing to grow our relationship with BLUU in the future.

In collaboration with the UU College of Social Justice, Standing on the Side of Love sponsored our second annual SSL Clergy Trip to the US/Mexico Border. This collaboration focused on the need to make linkages between US immigration policies and broader themes of racial justice within the US.

SSL's social media and web presence expanded considerably this year.

Twitter followers as of January 2016: 6,317
Average tweet impressions per month: 53,533
New Facebook followers in 2015: 29,211
Website visits in 2015: 38,660

The Standing on the Side of Love colors, logo, branding, and messages have been used creatively by UU congregations and groups for over five years. In 2015, staff decided it was important to create a more cohesive feel to the brand nationwide, while still allowing people to find unique ways to use it. SSL now provides brand materials for purchase online and guidelines for use of campaign content. To further spread the vibrant message of SSL, the UUA bookstore sells new merchandise bearing the distinctive logo.

New Standing on the Side of Love Campaign Director, Caitlin Breedlove, will focus on growing the base beyond current supporters. She brings over a decade of organizing and leadership development, building intersectional justice movements as the Director of Southerners on New Ground.

In the upcoming year, and for many to follow, Standing on the Side of Love will continue to bring UUs into organizing and advocacy work.



SSL supporters at a Mass Moral March in NC

COMMIT2RESPOND

Commit2Respond, originally a collaboration between the UUA and UUSC, is now a broad coalition and mobilization of Unitarian Universalists and allies who value environmental justice as a matter of faith. Nine leading UU organizations, 4,000 individuals, 150 congregations, and 40 other organizations have joined the Commit2Respond movement so far.

UUs are taking action to save our biosphere and add our moral voices to the intersectional, global movement for climate justice.

Commit2Respond helps UUs and others shift from an environmentalism framework, focused on actions like recycling, to an environmental justice framework, with actions like partnering with Indigenous communities to remove trash from their waters.

Commit2Respond organized the first-ever Climate Justice Month, March 22 to April 22, 2015, which

inspired people from 46 states and six different countries to make a variety of commitments to help stop climate change including promises to ride bikes, divest from fossil fuels, utilize mass transit, in addition to the ongoing advocacy and education work for climate justice.

At General Assembly 2015 in Portland, OR, more than 2,500 Unitarian Universalists and allies gathered for “A Sacred Public Witness,” organized by Commit2Respond. Attendees heard the story, struggle, and wisdom of leaders from Lummi Nation, who are on the front lines of the environmental crisis. Our witness called attention to their fight to keep the largest coal port in North America from desecrating Lummi Nation sacred lands and waters.

The first two years of Commit2Respond have been dedicated to building the partnerships within our UU movement. Our next step is to deepen partnerships with external organizations such as Interfaith Power & Light, Greenfaith, and 350.org.



UUs sharing messages of hope during the Climate Justice Public Witness event at GA 2015

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST UNITED NATIONS OFFICE

The Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office (UU-UNO) engages in international advocacy work at the United Nations, guided by Unitarian Universalist values. The group represents the UU goal of a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all. In the past year, the UU-UNO has offered numerous opportunities for UUs and world leaders to engage in productive dialogue about justice issues.

In November, 2015, the UU-UNO cohosted “Confronting the Silence: Perspectives and Dialogue on Structural Racism Against People of African Descent Worldwide,” a panel discussion highlighting Unitarian Universalist support for Black lives. The UU-UNO worked with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to affirm that institutionalized discrimination against people of African descent is a human rights issue in countries across the globe.

The same month, the UU-UNO represented the UUA and carried forth our environmental justice commitment at the COP21 event in Paris, attended by politicians and activists from all over the world. Six delegates helped increase visibility of Unitarian Universalism on world stage and showed our strong support for climate justice. The UU-UNO cosponsored panel discussions “Faith, Race, and Climate Change: Advancing a Moral Lens on Climate Justice through a Social Justice Framework” and “Examination of How Nations Have and Should Consider Equity and Justice in Setting INDCs.”

In April, 2015, the UU-UNO’s annual Intergenerational Spring Seminar focused on “International Criminal Justice: From Punitive to Restorative.” UUs from across the country, including 70 youth, were empowered to take action in their home communities on issues of criminal justice.

UU-UNO Director Bruce Knotts opened the seminar with a stirring invocation of the memory of Unitarian Universalist civil rights martyr Viola Liuzzo, murdered in 1965 while fighting for equal voting rights. He noted that while America no longer has laws that take away rights on an explicitly racial basis, our criminal justice system still creates systems of oppression. By remembering the strength and courage of those who have fought for civil rights, while drawing upon our own conviction and determination, we can help make the “New Jim Crow” history.



UU-UNO Spring Seminar 2015 at the UN

Topics of lecture and discussion included solitary confinement as torture, human trafficking, incarceration and its relationship with crime prevention, and policing reform. Danning Zhang, Seminar Chair, said, “In three short days, we had the chance to enhance our understanding of one of the most pressing social questions of our time and the opportunity to meet with people passionate for positive change.”

The UU-UNO hosted two events at the 2015 NGO Commission on the Status of Women forum in March which brought more focus to the UU-UNO’s women’s rights initiative centered on sexual and reproductive health and rights. “Reproductive and Mental Health of Women in Post-Humanitarian Crises” and “Mental Health Impacts of Global Gendercide and ‘Corrective’ Rape” both provoked interesting discussion and important connections with leaders on international women’s rights.

The UU-UNO’s Every Child is Our Child program provides education, school supplies, medical care, and more to children in Ghana whose families have been affected by HIV/AIDS. Staff and interns visited the schools to meet with Queen Mothers, the traditional female leaders in Ghana, and teachers to discuss community issues, including teenage pregnancy and school dropout rates. They considered how the UU-UNO and the schools could make changes to the program to better support the needs of the students.

Staff and interns spoke with students about their schooling, including Grace, a high school senior who wants to travel the world and study nursing. When asked what made her strive for an education in a country where education for young women often isn’t supported, she said, “I want to finish school because in my family, there are only two girls. I wanted to show my family and friends that education is just as valuable as anything else. I want to change things.”



Two students in Ghana



**UU-UNO staff and interns visiting
Every Child is Our Child schools**

BUILDING PROGRESSIVE POWER

The UUA's work has advanced progressive power for decades as we strive to affect hearts and policies.

Recently, UUA Donor Programs Manager Rev. Darcy Roake was listed as one of “16 Faith Leaders to Watch” by the Center for American Progress. Darcy is helping lead an effort to ensure that an embattled New Orleans Planned Parenthood clinic is built and open to serve women. She lobbied against restrictive reproductive health bills at the Louisiana State Capitol. The article states, “Rev. Roake’s witness shines in stark contrast to the vitriol of many of her opponents. She embodies the spiritual and moral values that undergird reproductive health, rights, and justice.”

The UUA works closely with the nearly 20 UU legislative ministries around the country, advocating for policy change at a state level. For example, the UU Justice Ministry of California focuses on the right

to water and immigration justice. Also, the Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network works on issues like ending mass incarceration, especially of people of color due to unjust drug laws and poor access to employment.

The UUA changes minds and hearts for good. As we face the toxic realities of racism, escalating inequality, and climate change, we hear Life’s Calling. When the voices of the marginalized are suppressed, we hear Life’s Calling. We answer with on-the-ground organizing, with immersion, with interfaith partnerships, and with a seat at legislative tables. Together, as the UUA, UU-UNO, UU congregations, and other partners, we create a more just world.



UUs celebrating the Supreme Court decision on Marriage Equality at GA 2015



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