Memorandum

To: UUA Board of Trustees

Subject: President's Report for January, 2015 meeting

From: Peter Morales

Date: January 11, 2015

Context

Rather than outline a number of activities, most of which are covered in other documents, I will use this President's Report to update the Board on key UUA initiatives with important long term implications.
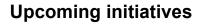
First, however, let me give some background and context. A core conviction of this administration is that Unitarian Universalism has enormous untapped potential. A second conviction is that this potential can only be realized by means of collaboration—collaboration within our congregations, across our congregations, among our UU organizations and, finally, collaboration with organizations outside our movement.

All of the major initiatives we have undertaken have involved new levels of partnership. Just as importantly, all of our most important initiatives have succeeded to the extent that we have created true partnerships. Here is a short list of important initiatives:

- **Strategic Review of Professional Ministries (SRPM)**—This has led to a number of subsequent projects. Among the most important is the development of *Fulfilling the Call*, a new way of looking at the most important abilities required for ministry. This is now the basis for the MFC's review of its core competencies.

- **Partnership with the UUMA**—The UUA and the UUMA do not have a history of collaboration. In the last five years we have

worked together to revamp ministerial continuing education and mentoring.

- **Partnership with the UUSC**—This has led not only to the formation of the College for Social Justice, but to close coordination in public witness. The new Commit 2 Respond effort is the latest example.

- **Justice GA**—Justice GA is important because it set a new standard for integration of public witness, worship, workshops, speakers and advance resources. It was made possible by an unprecedented level of partnership among local congregations, UUA field staff, UUA headquarters staff, local grassroots organizations, national immigrant rights organizations and interfaith partners like the UCC.

Upcoming initiatives

With this as background, I want to update the board on significant two initiatives: the entrepreneurial ministry training program and a new interfaith outreach effort.

Entrepreneurial Ministry—This program, which you have heard mentioned before, will begin later this month in California. This is a collaboration of the UUA and the UUMA, with important participation and consultation from business school faculty from Stanford, Chicago, Northwestern, Harvard, Duke and Wake Forest. This program has been in development for almost two years. It will involve 28 students, including UCC ministers and Union for Reform Judaism rabbis. The program will continue for two years. It will involve intensive four day meetings in Chicago, North Carolina (city to be determined) and Boston.

Interfaith Outreach—This effort is in the very early stages. Let me provide some context that goes into a little more depth than my abbreviated descriptions of other initiatives.

Many observers of contemporary religion have suggested that the future of progressive religion is in an "interfaith" future. Indeed, both of

our identity seminaries (Starr King and Meadville Lombard) have a strong interfaith component. Many of the students in the entrepreneurial ministry program proposed projects that aim at creating interfaith communities. And, of course, our congregations have a long history of promoting interfaith understanding, respect, appreciation and cooperation.

In addition, it is clear that the progressive elements in Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and other traditions have much more in common with one another than they do with the most conservative and reactionary elements of their own tradition. In truth, religious progressives from across traditions share values and a world view.

We have a long history of interfaith collaboration on matters of public witness and in work for tolerance and understanding. Examples include the Interfaith Alliance, Religions for Peace and the International Association for Religious Freedom. We work closely with interfaith partners on public witness on issues including marriage equality, immigration, racial equality and environmental justice.

However, religious liberals have never worked together to reach out spiritually to the growing population of the religiously unaffiliated (the now famous "nones"). We have many ways of engaging people who are already in our movements. We do not have ways of offering spiritual foundation and community to those who are not now in our movements.

In conversations with other leaders over the last several months I have explored the idea of working together to reach out. The response has been enthusiastic.

In May the UUA will host a day and a half meeting of a small number of progressive religious leaders to explore alternative next steps. Thus far the leaders coming include:

- Geoffrey Black—president, United Church of Christ

- Rick Jacobs—president, Union for Reform Judaism

- Aaron Stauffer—executive director, Religions for Peace, USA

- Victor Kazanjian—director, United Religions Initiative

- Brad Braxton—Ford Foundation, Religion in Public Life

We still need a Muslim leader. Eboo Patel of the Interfaith Youth Core (and recent Ware Lecturer) wants to be involved but cannot attend.

I should also mention that in a recent meeting of GAMAP, there was consensus on an interfaith focus for GA in 2016. We have not yet worked out what the theme should be called or the details of the framing.

I am convinced that there is enormous potential here. The culture is moving quickly in the direction of interfaith spirituality. Ours has always been an interfaith faith—going back to Transcendentalists' openness to eastern religion to humanism to today's embracing of "hyphenated" UU's: Christian, Jewish, Pagan, Buddhist, etc. We UUs are in a unique position to convene this effort. I will keep the board informed as this initiative develops.