
President's Report to the UUA Board of Trustees

April, 2011

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

The Rev. Peter Morales

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www.uua.org



Frances Sheets lights chalice for
Association Sunday
UU Church of Bloomington, IN



SSL campaign manager,
Dan Furmansky, presents
Courageous Love Award to
Joe Barnhart of Westside UU Church
Knoxville, TN



Members of Smit Unitarian Church
Khasi Hills, India

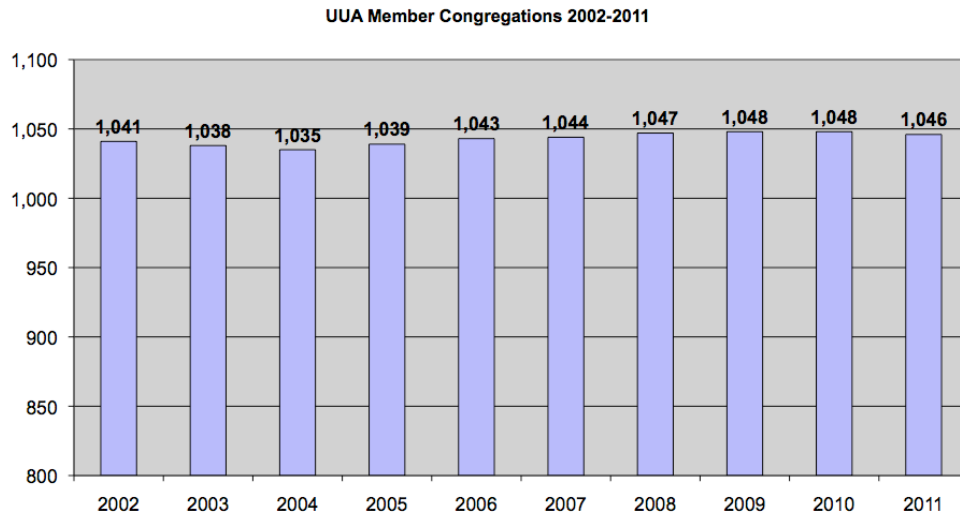
Introduction:

This report is intended to give a brief overview of significant developments in our Association. Several of these areas are topics for further conversation. These topics are identified with suggested discussion topics at the end of the section. Other items are intended as ongoing information and context for board deliberations.

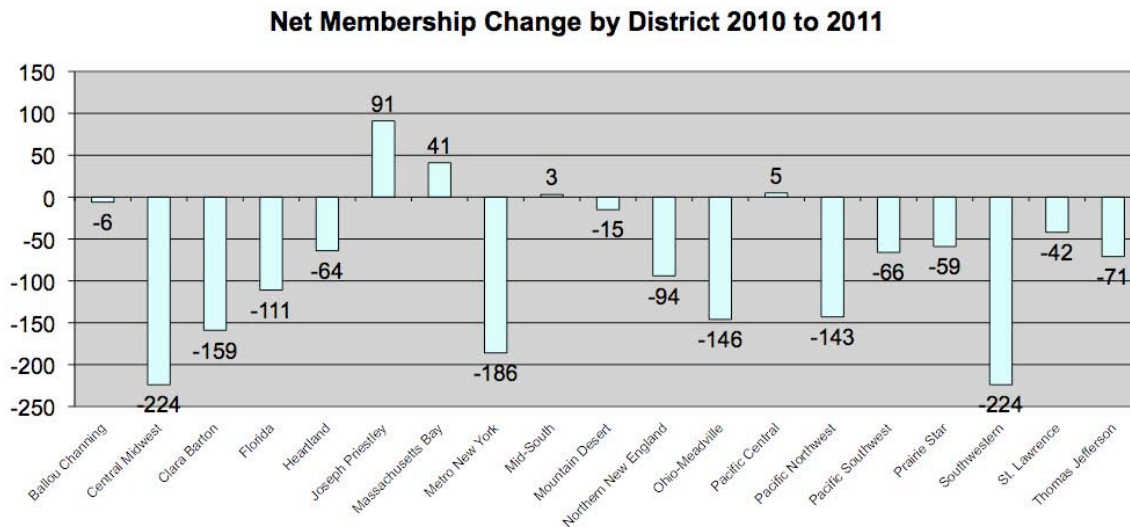
Membership

UUA growth highlights from the past year:

The number of congregations has declined from 1,048 to 1,046 in the past year. Since 2002 the number of congregations has increased from 1,041 to 1,046.



Adult membership has declined 1,400 from 164,196 to 162,796 in the past year, or 0.9%. This is the second consecutive year of decline.

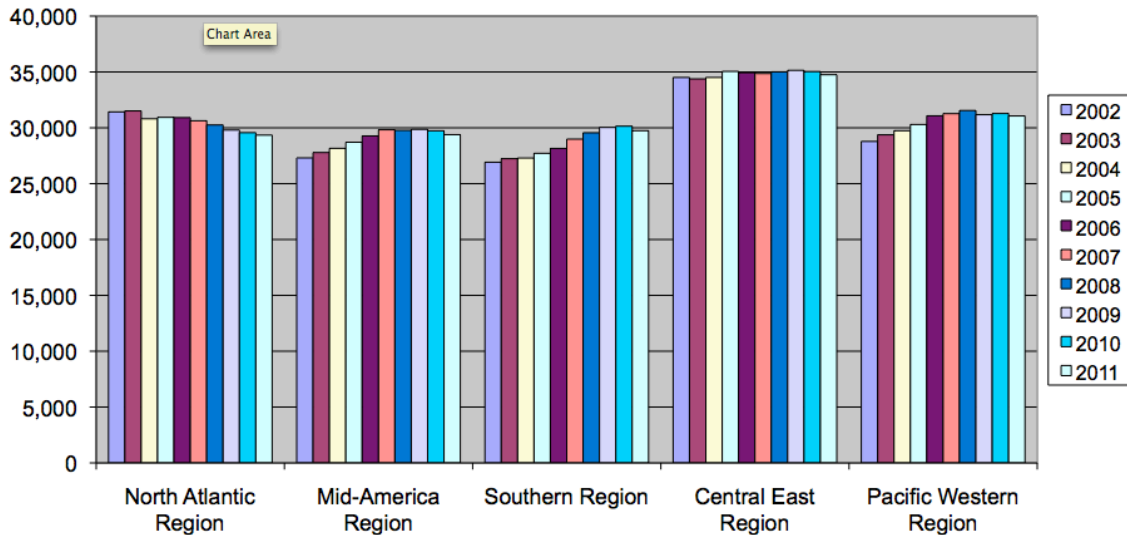


Religious education registration has declined 1,175 from 55,846 to 54,671, or 2.1%. This is the fourth consecutive year of decline.

Average Sunday attendance has declined 1,539 from 102,232 to 100,693, or 0.2%. This is the first year of decline.

Regional membership trends:

Members by Region 2002-2011



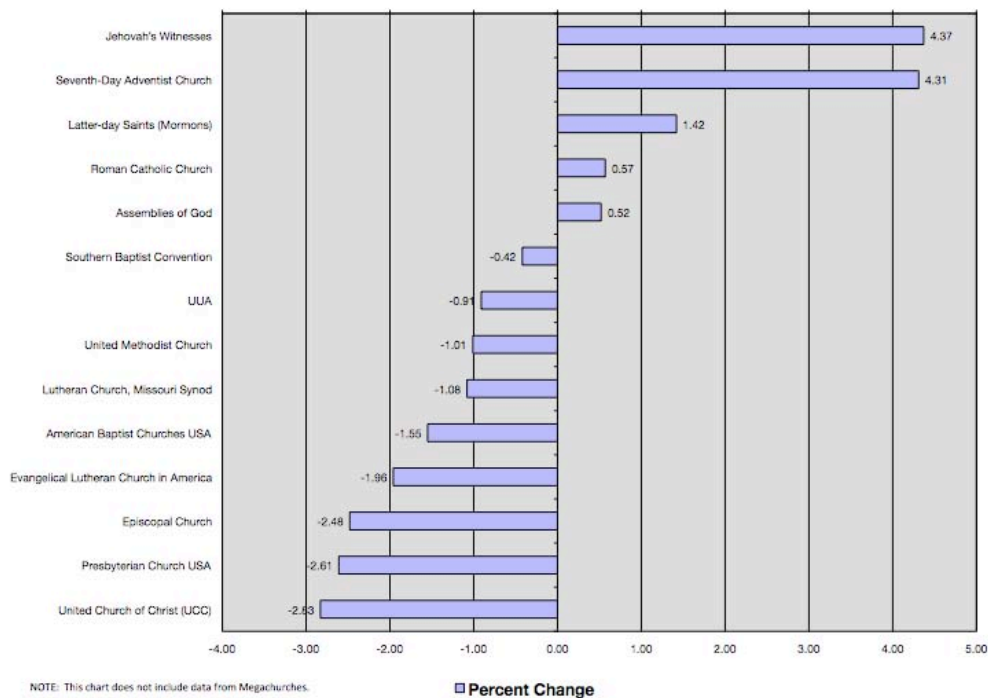
The direction of membership growth or decline remains stable, meaning churches that have been growing in recent years continue to grow and those that are declining continue to decline.

National growth highlights from the past year:

Conservative churches like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists

tend to be increasing in membership (4.37% and 4.31% respectively) while liberal churches like the United Church of Christ tend to be decreasing in membership (-2.83%).

Denomination Growth -- 2010 to 2011



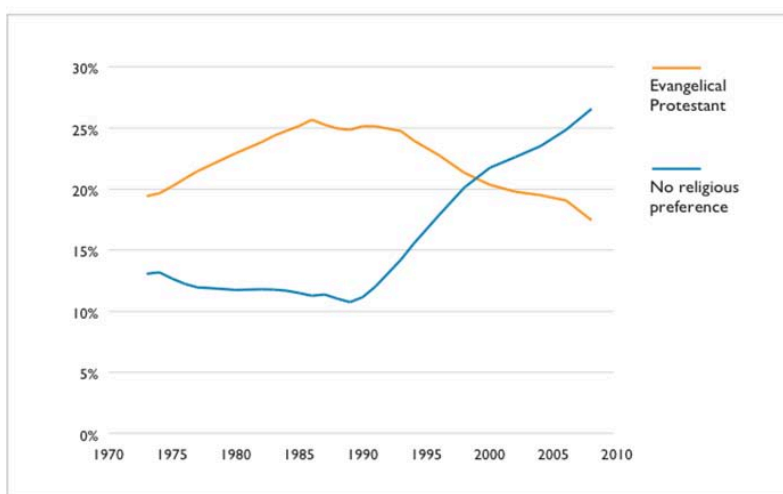
Note: The chart does not include megachurches, which do not report membership changes to the National Council of Churches.

NOTE: This chart does not include data from Megachurches.

■ Percent Change

Evangelicals and “Nones” among American religious youth and young adults.

Source: [American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us](#)



For Discussion

- Trends
- Implications for Unitarian Universalism

Breakthrough Congregations

The four 2011 Breakthrough Congregations have completed their videos which will be shown at General Assembly highlighting their successes and telling their stories. The four congregations are:

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Beaufort, SC (grew from 47 to 81 members or 72% in five years)

Westside Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Westside, WA (grew from 116 to 149 members or 28% in five years)

Unitarian Universalist Church of Peoria, IL (grew from 270 to 346 members or 28% in five years)

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, VA (grew from 574 to 713 members or 24% in five years).



Westside UU Congregation, WA

Multicultural Growth & Witness

Currently, 26 ministers of color are serving our congregations and 8 ministers of color have been selected to be candidates for congregations in search this year.

Multicultural Growth Consultation

On March 14-15, the UUA Multicultural Growth team sponsored a consultation in Baltimore, MD, with ministers from eight congregations engaged in intentional multiracial/multicultural ministry. Participants used an Appreciative Inquiry process to identify four important areas for creating effective multiracial/multicultural ministries: worship, ministerial leadership, justice ministries, and community life.



Finding Our Way Home Retreat for Religious Professionals and Seminarians of Color

On March 16-19, more than 60 ministers, religious educators and seminarians of color gathered in Silver Spring, MD, at this annual retreat. It featured workshops, dialogue and diverse daily worship.

Public Witness

National Standing on the Side of Love Day (February 14)

With the theme of "[Courageous Love](#)," UUs lifted up people who showed courage in advancing social justice and the rights of people targeted by violence, exclusion, and oppression based on identity. Campaign Manager Dan Furmansky traveled to the Tennessee Valley UU Congregation in Knoxville, TN, to participate in worship and a forum. Knoxville's response to a violent attack in 2008 in their sanctuary inspired the SSL Campaign.

Shoulder to Shoulder: Standing with Muslim Americans/Upholding American Values:

The UUA participated in a news conference of multi-religious leaders who oppose Rep. Peter King's hearings depicting Muslim Americans as non-cooperative in the battle against terrorism. The interfaith Campaign Coalition met with Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi and with members of the White House staff on February 10.

Immigration Reform Ministry:

The UUA continues to work with National Day Laborers Organizing Network (NDLON) to identify opportunities to engage UUs and interfaith partners in opposing Secure Communities. UUA representatives plan to attend upcoming roundtables with the Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office of Public Engagement to ensure that voices of faith are present.

Communication with the UU Congregation of Phoenix, AZ, is ongoing. Recently, UUs mobilized to support Sal Reza, leader of [Puente](#), who was arrested and denied the constitutional right to assembly at the Phoenix State Capitol.

Marriage Equality in Maryland:

Dan Furmansky supported efforts to pass marriage equality legislation, as well as efforts to pass the Maryland DREAM Act and Gender Identity Anti-Discrimination Legislation. His work with the UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland, allied organizations such as Equality Maryland, Casa de Maryland, the Human Rights Campaign, and legislators was featured in [publications](#) across the country.

Activism around Wisconsin governor's plan to cut benefits for public workers and collective bargaining rights for their unions:

I signed on to [the Interfaith Worker Justice's Open Letter](#) from Faith Leaders Against Attacks on Public Sector Workers. Over 250 UU clergy and congregational leaders have also signed.

Communications

My [Huffington Post submission](#) on Universalism that addressed Rob Bell's new book, *Love Wins*, received 21,834 impressions on the UUA's Facebook page, as well as 686 Facebook "likes," 205 Facebook "shares," and 88 Twitter reposts from the column's *Huffington Post* page.

[UU World's Facebook page](#) passed 10,000 "likes" in March. The magazine's weekly email newsletter now has 4,032 subscribers. Last month, there were 57,191 page views on *UU World's* website.

Sales of [Skinner House eBooks](#) have increased every month since they were launched in January and have now passed the \$1,000 mark in profit.



For Discussion

- Technology and the future of public witness
- Empowering the local level

Administration Initiatives

Strategic Review of Professional Ministries

In November of 2009, a Task Force of primarily UUA staff began the challenge of studying key areas of formation for professionals in our ministries and identifying the issues in order to be vital in the future. The final report, summary and recommendations are available on [uua.org](#).

This process included a review of many past reports, individual interviews and feedback from key stakeholders including UUMA, LREDA, UUMN.

The Task Force's culminating report offers eight recommendations explained in greater detail in the report. They are:

1. Aggressively recruit leaders;
2. Support multicultural immersion learning;
3. Re-imagine and evaluate our credentialing efforts;
4. Expand transition systems;
5. Support advanced learning for all religious professionals;
6. More strategic use of scholarships and grants;
7. Measure what is truly important; and
8. Go deeper: partner with related UU organizations.

For Discussion

- The Board's role
- Administration's role
- Professional ministry organizations—FY12 Association Sunday partnership

Appreciative Inquiry

Gathered Here - Claiming the best of our faith

*An invitation to all Unitarian Universalists to
discover our common aspirations and unleash our power.*

This joint project of the Board and the Administration will give all congregations and Unitarian Universalists a tool to discover what is most important to them and to capitalize on this in their communities.

On March 7 and 8, 2011, a group of volunteers met in Boston for a two-day meeting with Amanda Trosten-Bloom, a national expert on Appreciative Inquiry, to begin to shape this project. Out of this meeting came the name ("Gathered Here") and a start on some of the questions that will be posed to UUs and congregations. Currently, the design team is developing a timeline and a plan for implementation.

Leap of Faith

This pilot program, launched in October 2010, has established mentoring relationships between selected congregations. All the aspiring congregations have made visits to their mentoring congregations and



have come away inspired, rejuvenated, and committed to moving their congregations in vital new directions. Identification of next year's of Leap of Faith congregations has begun and we are hoping to double the number of congregations involved in this program. Two Brandeis University program evaluators have established rigorous evaluation standards that will help to design an even more productive program for next year.

| Leap of Faith Learning Communities | |
|---|--|
| <i>Mentoring Congregations</i> | <i>Aspiring Congregations</i> |
| Cedar Lane UU Church in Bethesda, MD | Emerson UU Church in Houston, TX |
| First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque, NM | First Unitarian Church in Des Moines, IA |
| First Unitarian Church in Dallas, TX | First UU Congregation in Ann Arbor, MI Unitarian Church in Summit, NJ |
| First Unitarian Church of Richmond, VA | First Parish in Milton, MA |
| First Unitarian Church in Rochester, NY | UU Church in Bloomington, IN West Shore Church in Cleveland, OH |
| Unitarian Church in Harrisburg, PA | First Unitarian Society of Denver, CO |

Regionalization

Two regional staff groups are now dramatically re-visioning their work together. The MidAmerica regional staff group (Central Midwest, Heartland and Prairie Star Districts) is moving forward with a two year plan to combine all their administrative and program functioning. This does not presume any kind of governance change, and their Boards are excited and supportive. The Southland regional group is exploring a similar move on a shorter timetable -- one year -- with special focus on evangelizing efforts. These changes will allow the districts to become more financially sustainable, but even more importantly, will allow staff to collaborate more effectively and to be more agile in responding to the needs of our congregations.

Youth and Young Adult Ministry

The Youth Ministry Advisory Committee met March 4-6 in Portland for an intense and productive meeting.

An “ARAOM/C Toolkit for Youth Ministry” and Integrating Youth with Special Needs Tool Kit” will be ready this fall, free, downloadable.

A Youth Leadership School Alumni Reception will be held at GA 2011.

Being More Visible, Changing More Lives: This 50 page guide for congregations on building and sustaining campus ministry programming is in final editing.

The [Young Adult Service Directory](#) is completed and on [uua.org](#). Volunteer internship opportunities under the heading “Young Adult Spirituality & Service” are listed in the left sidebar. These organizations have expressed interest in partnering with the UUA. More organizations will be added soon. All partnering organizations share UU values, provide domestic and international service opportunities, and allow for reflection while in service.

In progress:

- Promoting district and regional young adult service programming and social justice projects.
- Creating a standard curriculum for theological reflection and a journal, grounded in UU principles with guided questions, inspirational quotes and stories.
- Brainstorming a congregational sponsorship program to match young adults interested in volunteering with congregational members interested in funding their trip and expenses.

The Goldmine Leadership School model is currently operating in three districts and is expanding to Northern New England and Metro New York this summer. A Young Adult version of this program is kicking off in the PNWD this summer.

International Resources Office

India



On February 14-28, I visited the [Holdeen India Program](#) (UUHIP) partners. Our communications plan provided the best grassroots visibility that the Holdeen program has had among UUs in a very long time. I also brought greetings from the UUA to the 10,000 Unitarians of the Khasi Hills and the Unitarian Union of North East India (UUNEI). Visit the [Faith Without Borders](#) blog and view the [photo journal](#) of this trip.

The International Resources Office is pleased to announce that Derek Mitchell will serve as the new Director of the UUHIP effective August 1, 2011. Derek is uniquely well-acquainted with our partners in India, and brings a spiritual and philosophical understanding of the complexities surrounding human rights work as well as a vision for developing congregational relationships with UUHIP partners.

Uganda

Rev. Eric Cherry, International Office director, represented the UUA at the [Standing on the Side of Love event in Kampala](#), Uganda, in February and met with our partners. For the second year, LGBT advocates gathered in solidarity, and this year in remembrance of David Kato, an LGBT activist who was tragically slain in January. At great personal risk, over 200 attendees from the religious and LGBT communities continued their protest against the controversial Anti-Homosexuality Bill.

The [UUA/UU-UNO LGBT Uganda Fund](#), as of April 1, 2011, has raised \$31,360 from just over 170 gifts to be granted to our partners in Uganda.

Haiti

A [UU seminarian JustWorks trip to Haiti](#) will take place from May 25-31. The intent of this UUA-UUSC joint trip is to begin conversations to institutionalize service experiences for seminarians. The UUA will sponsor the attendance and participation of 4-8 seminarians. The seminarians will work with members of MPP (Papaye Peasant Movement), a UUSC partner organization, to construct and rebuild homes in a new eco-village for those affected by last year's tragic earthquake.

UUSC/UUA plans for additional joint JustJourneys in FY12 and FY13 are in process.

Japan

The [UUA/UUSC Japan Relief Fund](#) as of April 1, 2011, will be able to provide \$154,255 from just over 1600 gifts to be distributed in collaboration with our partners in Japan. Our partners, including Rissho Kosei-kai, Tsubaki Grand Shrine, the Konko Church of Izu, the Tokyo Dojin Church, and the Japan Chapter of the International Association for Religious Freedom are all in discernment about the specific efforts they will be taking to support recovery work.

Rev. Eric Cherry recently attended an International Council meeting of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF). He brought a [message of condolence, support, and solidarity to our interfaith partners](#) on behalf of the UUA.

UUA/UU-UNO

Negotiations are progressing toward a reintegration date of July 1, 2011.



For Discussion

- Volunteer opportunities
- Experiential Learning

Summary

These are times of change, challenge and opportunity. The challenges are striking: slow decline in membership, decline in children in our youth programs, and financial realities that constrain our ability to fund initiatives.

The opportunities are equally dramatic. Our most vital congregations continue to demonstrate the appeal of liberal religious community. The number of people who unaffiliated and theologically progressive is growing dramatically.

We have some important successes on which we can build. Our public voice is being heard as never before. A new generation of religious professionals of color is coming to maturity. Our “Leap of Faith” initiative that builds on the strengths of mentor congregations shows great promise. We are entering into a new era of partnership—including partnerships with religious professionals, with our leading congregations, with related organizations, with our brothers and sisters in other nations.

Our challenge as UUA staff and as the board of trustees is to lead change into a new era. The difficulties before us are daunting. Together we overcome them all.