

Report to the Board of Trustees

From UUA Staff: Terasa Cooley, Carey McDonald, Scott Tayler, Tandi Rogers

March 3, 2015

UUA staff, coordinated by Rev. Tandi Rogers, have reached out to 53 groups in “emerging congregation” status and five additional alternative-structure groups about the possibility of becoming a recognized community to be formally recognized at General Assembly 2015. So far, 13 groups are planning to apply for recognized community status (see the attached spreadsheet). We will update you if these numbers change.

Additional points which UUA staff would like to bring to the Board’s attention:

Naming idea - Groups we have reached out to responded very positively to the originally proposed title of “covenanted communities.” However, recognizing the theological questions about and implications of this title, we recommend the Board consider the title “covenantING communities.” We believe this active title avoids the confusion about the meaning of “covenant,” emphasizes the ongoing nature of covenantal commitments, and preserves the emphasis on the covenanting process that is meaningful to the groups themselves.

More groups pursuing full membership - An unexpected consequence of staff engagement with groups currently in emerging congregation status, initially to inquire about their interest in the recognized communities status, is that some groups have decided to renew their efforts for pursuing full congregational membership in the UUA (these are indicated on the attached spreadsheet). This positive development underlines the importance of creating a comprehensive system of support for new or emerging groups which includes both continuous engagement and a flexible structure that makes it easy for groups to adjust their goals from year to year.

Highway of support - We have frequently connected the Board’s exploration of formal status for these groups with a parallel process for UUA staff developing a continuous system of support for the same groups and other similar initiatives, using the metaphor of a “highway” with different “lanes” for different types of supports and resources. Our communication with groups who could potentially become recognized communities, especially around the nature of the relationship between these groups and the UUA, demonstrates the need for formal status to become more closely linked with systems of support. Though it is outside the scope of the Board’s request for the recognized communities exploration, staff will provide the Board with an update in the next week or two on the development of a comprehensive system of support for emerging groups so that this understanding can inform the Board’s decisions.

We hope this information answers the question posed at the fall meeting, please let us know what questions you have.