

Four Districts Partnership aka NRG (Growth Plan #3)

In July 2007, District Staff serving Metro New York, Joseph Priestley, Ohio Meadville and St Lawrence entered a partnership with each other and with Congregational Services to explore and experiment with new and different means of support for congregations in this four district region. We met in March 2008 to review current and future efforts. Various programmatic and resource efforts continue with several new ones under consideration. The culture change within the staff collective continues as the sense of partnership, sharing in a ministry to all the congregations in the region and the creative exploration of sharing staff time and expertise deepens each time we are together. Programmatic initiatives that embody the culture change include: support for youth and young district employed staff continues with a regular conference call convened by JPD Life Span Faith Development Consultant; second partnership sponsored Congregational Leadership Team Institute planned for mid summer, all NRG District Staff taking part in the MNYD annual meeting as workshop leaders, consideration of time sharing among the districts for the JPD Growth staff and MNYD leadership development staff, regional planning for on line/web based training, regional training for district "youth committees". Our March meeting included time with Taquiena Boston to focus on developing multicultural congregations - follow up ideas include a regional conference on this theme, a strategy session with NRG staff and Paula Cole Jones, ideas for use of Building the World We Dream About in the region. All of these "tactics" represent various means of living the NRG mission - exploring new and different means of support for congregations in this region.

FORTH Demonstration Project (Growth Plan #2, #4)

This new, comprehensive stewardship development program was introduced in *Beyond Fundraising: A Complete Guide to Congregational Stewardship*, written by Wayne Clark and published in April of 2007. There are five phases to FORTH: accepting, growing and investing, giving back, giving generously, and applying new learnings. There are five components within each phase: stewardship education, joyful giving, ministry and good works, the annual budget drive, and planned giving. A three-year demonstration project began in September of 2007. The purpose of the project is to determine FORTH best practices and then share that information with other UU congregations. Seven congregations were selected for the project. Each congregation has met with their FORTH consultant, developed an initial action plan and begun implementation. The details in each situation are tailored to fit that congregations needs. A preliminary report for 2007-08 is available.

First Unitarian Rochester NY LifeNow (Growth Plan #3)

This is a magazine format radio show promoting the liberal religious message through story and reporting, engaging the listener with the philosophical/ethical and moral implications pertinent to their lives. Programs are pod-cast on the congregation's website and i-tunes. The door to door campaign will take place in May and June when the community will be canvassed by church member volunteers and the ministers. They will knock on doors - asking folks to complete respond to the question - how can this church be of service to you. Each household will be given a CD of LifeNow Radio shows as a thank you. CDs will be left as "door hangers" where no one is home.

Planning for Growth for Small/Small Mid Size Congregations (Growth Plan #2, #4)

In partnership with Central Midwest, Clara Barton, and New Hampshire Vermont/Northeast Districts we have launched three pilot projects experimenting with an expanded consulting model for PFG and including a component for support/development of district infrastructure to support congregational growth. Each district is working with one of our PFG consultants. Congregations participating in the pilot in each district have been identified and plans for this first year have been developed by each district staff/consultant team. The latter two are piloting with small congregations and the former with smaller mid-size congregations. Central Midwest and Clara Barton began in Fall 2007, while New Hampshire/Vermont-Northeast will begin in Spring of 2008. Evidence of change and success is early and anecdotal, but there is much excitement among the participating congregations. The excitement is a necessary factor to their eventual culture change, which enables growth. Much work is done by the congregational teams between meetings, which are two to three months apart, and goals are set for the next meeting. The teams also communicate with one another and share successes, cheering one another on. This support amplifies the support from the districts and consultants.

First UU San Diego South Bay Campus (Satellite Ministry) (Growth Plan #3)

This initiative, arising out of the San Diego congregation, is designed to take our liberal religious voice to an underserved population in South Bay by growing First Church into a multi-site church with a second campus. SD County is served by five congregations. South Bay is the largest underserved area and is the fastest growing, with a population that is approximately 2/3 Hispanic, Asian and African American/Black. The organizing committee has been at work for about 7 months. A congregational coordinator is on site. The target area has been selected and a demographic study conducted. Church growth plans with an initial budget and time line have been developed. The current plan is hold their first public worship service in October 2008. Next steps: secure suitable facility, secure additional grant funds, refine vision and mission, develop religious education and worship plans, conduct marketing.

The Barber Shop Radio Show (Davies Memorial Unitarian Church) (Growth Plan #3)

"The barber shop is the poor person's country club. When people get their hair cut they discuss life. When I cut hair I am a poet, politician, parent, preacher, and prophet." The radio show re-launched on March 30 as an on line pod cast fully devoted to social responsibility. (The show began 3 years ago on an AM news talk radio station.) The "Master Barber" is the Rev. John Crestwell. Ten minute daily conversations examine ideas and issues important to Prince Georges County and the state of Maryland. The goal is to raise consciousness and awareness of listeners and to help them become better citizens, better thinkers and better people. You can find The Barber Shop at www.barbershopradioshow.com.

Initiatives Receiving Continuing Support

First Unitarian Albuquerque Branches Project (beginning year 2) (Growth Plan #3)

In the first year of the 18 month grant two branches have been developed (Socorro, and Edgewood) in remote towns. They worship weekly using a video recording of the First Church sermon. (The rest of the worship service is "live".) One branch has about 50 persons and an average attendance of 30, the other is about 1/3 that size. Socorro is

listed in Find A Congregation on uua.org. Both groups are excited and thriving, and account for about 10% of First Church's (considerable) growth. These new members are pledging at satisfying rates. The groups consist of about $\frac{1}{2}$ "old" UU's who had been living without a church or commuting to Albuquerque, and $\frac{1}{2}$ "new" UU's. First Church has worked to become a multi-site church, changed many procedures, given thought to our larger responsibilities, and tried to be responsive to the needs of our two branches. The question of what is done centrally and what is done by branches is ongoing. Our plan now is to document what we have done and learned and make it available on the church's website. We're also involved in networking with several other churches involved in multi-site projects.

WellSprings (beginning year 2 with public worship) (Growth Plan #3)

Sunday attendance: averaging 100 fall/winter and 112 winter/spring; 2007 Spring Break Sunday attendance 62 with same Sunday 2008 attendance 113; Easter 2007 attendance 92 with Easter 2008 138 plus 45 children/youth.

Membership: 74 adults after one year (2/3 new UUs); three recent new member classes included 39, 18 and 20 persons respectively.

Financials: Budget this fiscal year is \$250,000; Sunday income has reached \$4,000 twice in this program year; ahead of this fiscal year budget income projection by 10%; recently received an unexpected bequest gift of \$100,000; earlier gift intended as a challenge grant to match dollar for dollar each new member dollar given - match now in process from February 15-April 15. Cost savings: recently secured new office space - good fit/better location with a cost savings of \$800 a month; projecting ahead 18 months with confidence that there will be no need to reduce staff or ministries. This fiscal year is the last year of the UUA grant totaling \$250,000 over 3 years with final payment made in March.

WellSprings was part of a consultancy for growth that included four other congregations impacted by the new start - Mainline, West Chester, Pottstown and Thomas Paine. These latter three worked with the Rev. Tom Chulak, who served as the consultant for this whole North Chester County, PA project. A full report on the consultancy has just been completed.

Unitarian Society of New Haven/Partnership for Growth (4th year) (Growth Plan #2, #3)

The Partnership was designed to grow this healthy mid-sized congregation (just under 400 members) into the "large" category over the course of four years. The strategy was an increase in programs and attention available to current and new members through expanding staff in the areas of membership development (including young adults and teens), pastoral care and social justice. In addition, Unitarian Society of New Haven (USNH) took the lead in establishing a new level of collaboration with the four other mid-sized congregations in the Clara Barton District: Hartford, West Hartford, Northampton and Worcester: sharing best practices among the congregations, and increasing the value of the USNH experiment by including these similarly-sized congregations and supporting their growth.

Update: USNH has struggled with the loss of a major renter and a new mortgage for a recently completed building project (sanctuary) coming together to create significant financial challenges. A task force has recently completed work on a plan to address these financial needs, including a plan for upgrades to the space used by the former rental tenant (a school). Implementation of the plan is beginning and negotiations with a new tenant are in process. The staff positions created as part

of the Partnership are continuing to develop: the half-time Assistant Minister, whose work is devoted to pastoral care and spiritual development, is continuing with a focus on pastoral ministry as outreach; a half-time Social Justice Coordinator has strengthened this ministry (including organizing an event to be held later this month that may result in the creation of a state wide UU action network) but will not be continuing next year; a part time Youth Coordinator supports the volunteer leaders for the youth group whose membership may be 35-40 next year; a Membership Coordinator position will be maintained. The Rev. Kathleen McTigue reports that membership is holding steady and that numerical growth is not moving them as rapidly as planned from large mid-size to large. The annual stewardship campaign is currently underway - with financials and membership data to be available later this month.

Regional Marketing (Growth Plan #3):

The regional campaigns have the following goals:

1. Generate brand awareness of Unitarian Universalism
2. Increase visitor attendance at local congregations
3. Increase membership
4. Create excitement and pride among Unitarian Universalists in the area

All campaigns have congregational preparedness as a component. This is accomplished through a series of workshops on hospitality and membership, prior to the campaign.

San Francisco Bay Area -

The San Francisco Bay Area marketing campaign concluded the end of October (with some smaller publications continuing into November). Remaining dollars were spent in early January 2008 on KDFC, a classical radio station, to attract visitors looking for a spiritual home in the new year. This regional campaign was the largest ever in several ways: number of congregations participating (17), dollar amount raised (\$300,000+), donor participation (600) and diversity of the media mix.

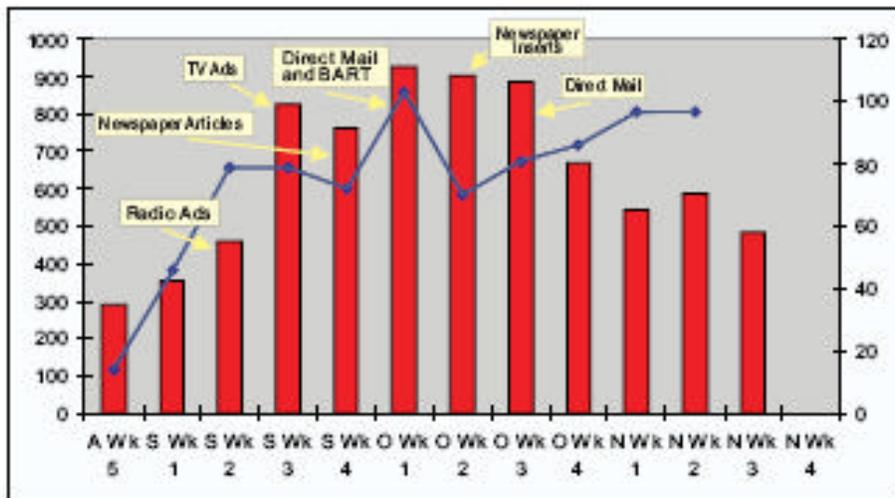
The media plan included:

- KQED public radio: four weeks of *General Service Announcements* on shows such as *All Things Considered*, *Morning and Weekend Edition*, *News*, and *Prairie Home Companion*.
- KQKE, six weeks on *Air America* with Thom Hartman, a new environmental show called *Green Seed Radio* and the *Progressive News Hour* with John Scott.
- KGO, *Sunday GodTalk* (a liberal religious program) three Sundays in October, three spots per program.
- TV - *The Daily Show* and *Colbert Report* on the Comedy Network: To attract the younger liberal audience we ran 4 weeks of commercials on these popular shows.
- Newspaper Inserts: ~460,000 four page, 4-color flyers were inserted in the major newspapers the weekend of October 4-7. These were inserted by targeted zips provided by the congregations.
- Direct Mail: 250,000 oversized postcards were sent to households the week of September 24th. Those same households received the four page insert mailed directly to their homes the week of October 15th for a one-two punch.

- Specialty Publications: Newspaper ads in the major GLBT weekly publication - the Bay Area Reporter, and full page four color ads in the following national magazines - Parents, Parenting, Family Fun and American Baby reaching 200,000 subscribers.
- 100 transit boards on BART stations the month of October.
- Internet: Google ads and web banners on specialty sites; 500,000 impressions on SFGate.com
- Guerrilla Marketing: \$10,000 was provided to a local regional marketing group for ads in small specialty niche publications and media.

From mid-September through mid-November, 820 first time (recorded) visitors attended one of the 17 congregations. In addition, weekly visits to the uuba.org website increased significantly. Prior to the campaign, visits averaged ~20/day - during the campaign visits increased three fold. The chart below, provided by Cilla Raughley, District Executive of the Pacific Central District, summarizes these statistics.

Weekly visits to the website (the red column and left y-axis) mirrored the bell-curve spending of the campaign, with a campaign high of over 900 website visits the first week in October. Visitor attendance (the blue line and right hand y-axis) also peaked that week with over 100 visitors. Visitor attendance experienced another spike after the second direct mail dropped several weeks later, and remains strong, reflecting the lag effect of the advertising.



A final report is expected in May.

Tampa Bay Area -

In February 2008 the Tampa Bay Area campaign was launched. 8 congregations are participating. Stewardship & Development raised \$236,000 between August 2007 to February 2008; a significant accomplishment in a short time frame. The campaign concluded in early April.

Media Mix:

- TV Advertising: 108 commercial spots on Comedy Central Network - Daily Show and Colbert Report, Dr. Phil, Oprah and nightly news

- Radio: WMNF community radio. 12 weeks, 10 spots per week
- Print - Specialty Publications:
 - Newspaper ads in the major GLBT publications -
 - Watermark - four ads,
 - Gazette Monthly Magazine - 2 ads
 - West Coast Woman - 2 ads, monthly - February and March
 - The Oracle (University of South Florida newspaper) - 8 ads over 4 weeks
 - TBT Newspaper - four ads over four weeks
 - Creative Loafing - 4 ads
- Direct Mail: 150,000 oversized postcards were sent to households the week of February 18th. Those same households received the four page insert mailed directly to their homes the week of March 9th for a one-two punch
- Billboard Advertising: 3 boards on major roads - 5.5 million views during the four week period
- Newspaper Inserts: 260,000 four page, 4-color flyers were inserted in four major newspapers Sunday, March 2nd. These were inserted by targeted zips provided by the congregations.
- Internet: Google ads and web banners on major news sites: tbo.com (the Tampa Tribune site); tampabay.com (St. Petersburg Times site) and heraldtribune.com (the Sarasota Herald Tribune site) ; 2 million impressions
- Sponsorship: Major sponsor of Tampa Pride, an event for the GLBT community
- Alternative Media - screen ads in art-house movie theatres
- DVD "Voices of a Liberal Faith": sent to each UU in market to "share with a friend"
- Public Relations - Newspaper articles in major publications

Results are pending, but early indicators are favorable. Website hits are strong. Recent statistics show over 150 visits to the uutba website on a daily basis since the first direct mail piece was delivered. Initial guest attendance has also been strong. Sunday, February 24th the Tampa congregation welcomed 15 and the Clearwater church welcomed 30 guests.

A full report is expected in June.

Other Regional Campaigns: the schedule for regional campaigns for FY09 and FY10 is being reviewed and revised as a result of changes in some areas and news areas stepping forward for consideration. After further consultation with local leaders and District Staff, we are considering rescheduling the Dallas Fort Wroth area campaign for Fall 2009. Regional campaign criteria have been reviewed and revised:

- Minimum number of congregations: 7 (though we are considering some smaller regions)
- Completion of a conditional feasibility study to determine the "readiness" of the participating region, including review of fundraising capacity/interest and hospitality assessment.

- All congregations in the region need to sign on together (that means commitment and preparation as a group)
- Long term commitment/ sustainable interest over a 2 year period.
- Commit to local fundraising. This includes, but is not limited to identifying the most generous donors in each congregation to Stew/Dev so that they can be approached to be generously supportive of this opportunity to grow UUism, promoting generosity towards the campaign, creating a local team to actively assist in fundraising activities.
- A region that is showing signs of growth and health
- Obtaining and using the demographic and life style data that will assist in determining who we want to reach; demographic indication that there are constituencies with a propensity towards liberal religion
- Commitment on the part of all the congregations involved to hospitality, welcoming and the preparation that may be needed in these areas, as well as a focus on membership retention
- Commitment to providing statistics for benchmarks (data from the past), data from the campaign period and data post campaign so that we can determine success based on numbers (though numbers are not the only markers of success)

New Creative Materials: A significant accomplishment has been the creation of consistent advertising materials for the regional campaigns. Expanding on the "Imagine a religion" message, all the creative materials use the same graphics, color palette, type style and tagline and were tested (and well received) with focus groups in the San Francisco Bay Area in September 2007 (included mothers with children, older adults in a life transition -loss of job, divorce, etc.- and young adults)

Information on our **NATIONAL ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN** was included in the Congregational Services Board Report.