

**Growth Strategies Update**  
**March 21, 2006**  
**prepared by Tracey Robinson-Harris**

The UUA Growth Team has identified strategies to support one of the three purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association - to open the doors of Unitarian Universalism to people who yearn for liberal religious community:

- #1: Create a Growth Team to advise and make recommendations to the president.
- #2: Support innovative ideas that arise from congregations or clusters.
- #3: Lift up congregational excellence to inspire congregations to learn from one another.
- #4: Initiate and support metro/regional growth planning and plans.
- #5: Support for advertising and marketing.

This update focuses on those for which Congregational Services staff and/or consultants have responsibility. Additional information is at <http://www.uua.org/cde/newcong/index.html> or <http://www.uua.org/programs/congservices/uncommon/index.html>

***Support innovative ideas that arise from congregations or clusters***

Two new partnerships have been added.

Eastern Connecticut Growth Initiative (Clara Barton District):

In the assessment and exploration stage, this initiative would bring together five congregations east of the Connecticut River (two mid size and three small) to determine if a collective staffing plan can be developed and implemented that would enhance the growth and vitality for all the congregations involved. In order to gather more information, the UUA and the five congregation collective are in conversation with the Rev. Jane Dwinell (small congregation consultant for the Northeast District) about doing an assessment of the congregations and the proposal. Costs for the assessment would be approximately \$2500 and shared by the UUA and the congregations.

The Chrysalis Way (Florida District):

As the primary responsibility for most new congregation starts shifted to the districts, Susan Smith (minister), Connie Goodbread (Healthy Congregations Consultant) and Mary Higgins (District Executive) began conversations about how we could do that in a healthy and deep way in Florida. After significant conversations we enthusiastically agreed to develop a new model for congregational formation that the Florida District could eventually share with other districts. We will have CDs of the curriculum available at GA this year in St. Louis and Susan and Connie will also lead a workshop. Those in other districts have indicated their excitement at the unveiling. Out of this work with our emerging congregations, we also see the potential for a model that will apply the same lessons in health and growth to existing congregations through a three-five year program.

The Chrysalis Way is an 18-month high expectation incubator for Emerging Congregations. Those who have identified themselves to the District Executive as wishing to be Gatherers for various new UU congregations are formed into one Learning Community under the leadership of a Coaching Team made up of a Parish Minister in final fellowship and a Credentialed Religious Educator. In this way, even tiny groups have the benefit of professional leadership from the beginning of their formation process and an opportunity to explore the full potential of shared ministry.

Gatherers sort themselves into two leadership categories: Steering Committee Members and Small Group Ministry Facilitators. All Gatherers from all Emerging Congregations meet together for a monthly Chrysalis Way session. Each session explores some aspect of congregational

formation and models specific teaching, worship, and programming techniques. Faith development programming for children is provided during each session.

The majority of the work of Gatherers is done during the month as they fulfill specific personal and group assignments interacting with the Coaching Team via phone calls, email and personal visits. Often this homework involves recreating session exercises for their entire Emerging Congregation. Each Gatherer understands himself or herself to be a Religious Leader in a process of formation being equipped to guide others into Shared Ministry and Faith Development.

The Chrysalis Way, as the chrysalis motif suggests, is an intentionally slow process in which public worship and official recognition are goals rather than a starting point for congregational formation and in which continuous transformational change is embraced as a sign of vitality. Emerging Congregations are organized around a progressive Faith Development path through Small Group Ministry utilizing three UU curricula: Evensong, Our Chosen Faith, and Weaving the Fabric of Diversity. Steering Committees learn the tasks and responsibilities of Committees on Ministry rather than Boards of Trustees and how to use such tools as Percept Surveys, The Uncommon Denomination program, and the UUA's congregational self-assessment instruments.

The Chrysalis Way begins with an identification of Shared Values which only eventually shape covenant, vision, mission, ministries, structure, and bylaws. The Shared Values of each Emerging Congregation intersect with a comprehensive understanding of the larger community that they will serve. Meaningful service to both Unitarian Universalism and the local community guide the formation of the congregation's mission. Emerging Congregations begin an unending cycle of self-examination, ministry context study, goal-setting, and self-assessment to encourage a responsive and evolving sense of mission. They launch public worship when they know who they are, who they will serve, and how they intend to serve them.

Currently, we are working with three congregations. One of our initial groups dropped out after the first two sessions. Another initial group that had already begun public worship before joining the program decided to pull out of the program because it did not suit their needs, though a remnant remained and continue to participate. Two of these congregations are the products of congregational conflicts and received two additional prep sessions before the official program began. In the first three sessions of the program, each Emerging Congregation, in a very structured way, grappled with the reality of forming a new congregation that enabled them to clarify their motivations, sort out the committed from the merely interested, and pull out of the process, if appropriate.

After a year of training, the groups have been through many changes within the chrysalis and are in a rapid process now of utilizing their learning. Two of the three are preparing to seek spaces and launch public worship this spring or early summer as the program ends. In the meantime, they are providing excellent small group, private worship, social, and congregation building programs for a growing number new UUs. The remaining remnant from the third group is reexamining the split by which it was formed and is considering taking its learning back to reunite with its original congregation. We think this would also be a healthy outcome of having worked with a group who is product of a split.

The budget includes money from the UU Funding Panel for the pilot project, money from the Sunday School Society for the development of the children's curriculum for emerging congregations, money from two district funds as well as Growth council money, contributions from the emerging congregations themselves, and a modest grant from the UUA (\$5,000)

At the inception of the project the UUA committed to provide in kind support as needed to develop and share the resources coming out of this project. The UUA Growth team met by phone with Susan Smith, the parish minister/coach to the leaders of the new congregations. Recently, the UUA made a grant of \$5,000 for the completion of the project.

On –going partnerships include:

The CBD Partnership for Growth (PFG) is an attempt to assist the Unitarian Society of New Haven in accelerated growth from a large mid-size to large congregation over the course of four years AND an experiment in collaborative relationships with the four other largest UU congregations in the Clara Barton District. This collaboration is designed to forge mutually supportive ties among the congregations to aid all five in becoming stronger and larger; and to assist the UUA in creating a model for large mid size congregational growth that will be widely applicable.

Davies Memorial Growth/Diversity Plan is reported on below in the update on the Baltimore/Washington Regional Growth Plan.

***Initiate and support metro/regional growth planning and plans (some regional plans are included in the section on advertising and marketing below)***

Albany/Capital Region (St. Lawrence District):

I have had an initial phone consultation and information sharing with the team of leaders exploring the possibility of a marketing campaign for the congregations in this region.

Dallas/Fort Worth:

The review panel report on Pathways is complete and will be on the agenda of this Board meeting.

Information on the Dallas/Fort Worth marketing campaign is included in the report prepared by Valerie Holton for this Board meeting and submitted separately.

Philadelphia/Wilmington:

This regional strategy is focusing on the start of a large congregation and growth consulting support for the new congregation's closest neighbors. The Rev. Tom Chulak is serving as Congregational Services Consultant to WellSprings, as well as providing consulting support to Thomas Paine UU Fellowship, the Unitarian Fellowship of Westchester and the UU Fellowship of Pottstown. Tom is in the area for work with the cluster on a quarterly basis. Conversations about marketing strategy for the new congregation and for the cluster will begin soon.

Update on WellSprings - from Free Flowing, the periodic e-newsletter prepared by the Rev. Ken Beldon:

In early January, we hosted the church health and growth consultant Tom Bandy. Tom has worked with vibrant congregations in the US, Canada, and Australia, helping them to develop their distinctive sense of identity and reason for being.

Tom introduced us to methods for articulating our DNA (Core Values, Bedrock Beliefs, Motivating Vision and Key Mission) that will guide our growth and give us a consistent and meaningful message to share with our community.

The Planting Team and the Minister have begun the process by developing our Core Values: the real, achievable preferences and choices that we will strive to make in our expression of our spiritual worldview at WellSprings. To do so, we committed the month of February to talk with each other, and people beyond the Planting Team, about the values that will make our congregation healthy, reliable, and able to grow.

After our discussion of Core Values, we will move to discerning our Bedrock Beliefs—the ideas, stories and symbols to which we can turn for strength and motivation to live lives of spiritual purpose and meaning.

Having set the first two foundations, the Planting Team members will pair off as duos and be trained in small group leadership to lead four different spirituality groups for people interested in WellSprings. Starting in early May, these groups will be invited into the same kind of spiritual and fellowship development that the Planting Team experienced throughout this past fall. After meeting for a few months, these groups will help the minister and the Planting Team to articulate our Vision and Mission.

These small groups will meet through the late spring, summer and early fall to build an even stronger foundation for WellSprings. Having shared in spiritual growth and community with each other, we will be equipped to start planning the kinds of outreach and ministries that will attract others to our congregation. Throughout the fall, we will be building towards the launch of our Sunday morning worship and religious education programs in January 2007.

As part of this process, we will be helping each other to discern our sense of call within the congregation: the places where each of our individual, unique gifts can help nurture the overall ministry of the congregation. We'll also be developing additional small groups based upon areas of our lives in which we wish to grow spiritually and in service to the communities in which we live.

Our website [www.wellspringsuu.org](http://www.wellspringsuu.org) is up! Right now, it contains rudimentary information, but in the near future, we'll be adding an introduction to the minister and the Planting Team, some of the key books and learnings that are guiding our growth, as well as a link to the minister's blog.

We have been in communication with Elizabeth Lesser, the co-founder of The Omega Institute, the spiritually holistic center in Upstate New York, to be our major public speaker in the autumn. Ms. Lesser has written with insight and wisdom about the experience of being a spiritual seeker, the exact kind of people we are trying to reach. We hope to have a date arranged with her in the near future. The purpose of this event will be to raise WellSprings' visibility and to publicly introduce ourselves to the surrounding communities.

Please forgive me if this next item seems immodest: The sermon I delivered on the Sunday after Election Day 2004, has been included in a collection entitled "Representative American Speeches 2004-2005". Here's where you can find information about it:  
[http://www.hwwilson.com/print/RS\\_speeches\\_2004\\_05\\_toc.cfm](http://www.hwwilson.com/print/RS_speeches_2004_05_toc.cfm)

Throughout the spring, I'll be preaching at area congregations, including Media, Pottstown, Germantown, Harrisburg, Collegeville and Main Line.

Baltimore/Washington:

This regional strategy has as one of its goals support for the developing racial and cultural diversity. This includes support for the Growth/Diversity Plan of the Davies Memorial Congregation. Paula Cole Jones serves as the Congregational Services consultant to this effort, with Tom Chulak and Wayne Clark offering additional consulting. In addition to leading locally at Davies, The Rev. John Crestwell of Davies, and Paula Cole Jones are also providing leadership to the regional growth strategy team focusing in this area.

The Davies Growth Plan and other information – including information on their Dialogue on Race and other anti racism resources – can be found on the congregation's web site at <http://www.dmuuc.org/update.html>

Here is a brief update from John Crestwell:

The church is on fire! We have reignited our social action committee, started to develop covenant groups, and our other committees have expressed their desire to do their part whatever it is... The Board is operating quite efficiently as well. I'm proud of these committed folk!

We had 145 at our service just last Sunday. There were no seats! Attendance has been good.

Last year, we signed 26 new members which was the most in 30 years. On Feb 5th, we signed 12 more new members. I have a list of about 15 that are still pending. Of the 12 -- 6 were White and 6 were Black. We have 67 Blacks (kids included) who come at least once per month . . . we are diverse now and the congregation (most) have grown past the belief that Blacks need a Black preacher and Whites need a White minister.

I would bet we are 30% diverse among adults and 40% or more diverse when you add the kids in.

Our new member goal in '06 is 40 this calendar year. We are certified in '06 with 130 members presently and 61 kids. But, next year we want to add 40 and certify at 170 members and 90 kids so we can be a breakthrough congregation and begin to share our story more, letting folk know what can be done with love and determination!

In '07 our goal is to sign 80 new members (which may be too ambitious!) but it's worth that college try! Momentum does some crazy things sometimes!! I shared my vision of our new sanctuary (in fact what was the ministers study is being converted into a meeting room for all because I said "my new office isn't built yet" :) -- and what our church and grounds would look like as well as what our work in the future would look like and the congregation got excited and many said they were behind the vision. So I think the vast majority are really ready to grow now.

I've been keeping myself in the papers & I also was on TV standing up with other UU ministers in Maryland on the Marriage Equality rights issue and we have kept our own newspaper "Freedom Express" going successfully. Also, we are about to launch an ongoing print campaign, using UUA created ads, in local papers; and I'm working on an update to my Barbershop website, so that will be additional publicity in the coming weeks.

(Earlier this year, John launched his radio talk show ["The Barbershop"](#) on [WOL 1450 am](#) that airs Saturdays from 6-7pm.)

**Support for advertising and marketing – detailed information on marketing is found in the Uncommon Denomination report within the Congregational Services report.**

A report on UUA Marketing Outreach 1999-2005 is being prepared by Valerie Holton and is expected to be completed by mid-April.

In 1999 the Executive Staff Council completed work on a strategic plan that included the following initiative: *"Develop and test new means for attracting and retaining new members in preparation for a major national campaign for that purpose."*

Since then, the following regional advertising campaigns have been conducted:

- Kansas City: 2003
- Long Beach: To support GA 2004
- Houston: January - April 2005
- North Texas (Dallas/Ft. Worth): June (pre GA) - August 2005
- New York City: Times Square, holiday season 2005

Campaigns are currently planned in the following markets for 2006:

- Southern California (Orange County, Long Beach and South Bay): Fall 2006
- St. Louis: GA06 and Fall 2006

All the 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.

The report will summarize each campaign with results-to-date. Included is a section on "lessons learned".

Additional information about our marketing resources and completed campaigns can be found on line using links at <http://www.uua.org/programs/congservices/uncommon/>

San Francisco Bay Area:

A fall 2006 campaign is under consideration. It would involve the 17 congregations in this area. A preliminary media plan (estimated \$250,000) was presented on February 11, 2006. A UU regional marketing group in the Bay Area currently exists. They have developed a regional brochure and already instituted radio ads to support outreach efforts. Valerie Holton conducted a Marketing Workshop in fall 2005 to begin to get the congregations to think strategically about marketing. (This is a President's Roundtable)