

UUA Growth Strategies Update
prepared by Tracey Robinson-Harris
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The UUA Growth Team has identified strategies (draft as of 6/1/05) 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 tactics for which Congregational Services staff and/or consultants have responsibility. Information relevant to these tactics is on line 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 – CBD Partnership for Growth; Davies Memorial Growth/Diversity Plan.

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.

Highlights of Year One (concluded June 30, 2005)

- ❖ Reconstruction of the USNH website (25% of this year's visitors told us our website was their first introduction to USNH)
- ❖ Development of a rigorous system of data collection and analysis
- ❖ Creation of a dynamic Young Adult group now over forty individuals/nearly 30 are new to USNH.
- ❖ New outreach effort: spots on NPR radio stations, ads in local entertainment/calendar weekly, flyers on campuses/in coffee houses, ads in concert or drama ad books.
- ❖ New initiatives to bring newcomers into deeper connection at USNH
- ❖ Four gatherings of lay leaders from the five PFG congregations & regular meetings among the ministers. The June 05 gathering was on "Welcoming as a Spiritual Practice." Topics for FY06 are Strengthening Small Groups Ministry and Strengthening our Lay Ministry Teams (Caring Committees).
- ❖ Creation of an e-list linking lay leaders from the five PFG congregations
- ❖ Dissemination to leaders within the PFG congregations of all advertising and data-gathering tools implemented thus far.
- ❖ Changes in the PFG staffing plan to meet the changing realities of staff capacity and congregational ministry.

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 – Dallas/Fort Worth; Philadelphia/Wilmington; Baltimore/Washington (other regional plans are included in the section on advertising and marketing below)

Dallas/Fort Worth:

While we do not currently have sufficient statistical data from the Metroplex congregations to offer a numerical analysis; anecdotal information from the early fall indicates that almost all congregations saw increases in visitors throughout the summer and into the early fall with some reporting increases in membership. Both guest and new member numbers were reported to be slightly higher than in previous years. Anecdotes referenced the four page tab insert and the postcards as motivators for folks visiting one of our congregations. In October and November phone contacts with folks who had recently moved to the DFW area were completed. A data report on these calls is available.

As you know, a separate evaluation of the Pathways endeavor is underway.

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. In January we will begin conversations about marketing strategy for the new congregation and for the cluster.

Update on WellSprings: The Rev. Ken Beldon began his ministry in August 2005. With his arrival the Steering Committee appointed by the Main Line Unitarian Church has re-organized and will focus on research of governance structures for the future Wellsprings Board, serve as liaison on administrative needs between MLUC and WellSprings, prepare incorporation papers, help gather volunteer and other support. Informal invitations brought out 62 people who met in 8 focus groups during September at the WellSprings office. Many will continue in a monthly book reading group. The Planting Team has met weekly through the fall to prepare themselves for the essential work of building the solid foundation upon which WellSprings will be built. This Team will meet with church growth consultant Tom Bandy. (A one page overview of the Planting Team process is available.) The revised staffing plan called for an advisory committee to work with Ken to hire a Church Administrator. Ken continues to conduct interviews with local area leaders building information and support for the public phases of the launch.

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.

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> . The Growth Plan begins with these words:

Davies church sits in the richest and most educated African-American community in the nation – Prince George’s County, Maryland. The southern section of the county, where our church is located, is 75% African-American. The county at large is 62% African-American. There’s a unique opportunity here, both for the congregation and the Association. Our vision is two-fold. First, we intend to raise community awareness of Unitarian Universalism by inviting our neighbors and sharing with them the good news of the Unitarian Universalist faith. Second, we intend to gain new members because we have a message to share that lifts people up in a way that other religions do not. To live by our faith is to truly see the inherent worth and dignity in all and help them see it in themselves and others, too. If we’re sharing this message well, more people will come – people from all races, ages, classes and genders. We will grow in racial diversity.

The first year of the plan concluded June 30 2004. Compared to the previous two years, data showed:

- 2002: 48 visitors/16% became members or friends; 78 pledging units; RE enrollment 58; 12 new members including 2 African American
- 2003: 54 visitors/22% became members or friends; 85 pledging units; RE enrollment 51; 4 new members/none were African American
- 2004: 71 visitors/41% became members or friends; 99 pledging units; RE enrollment 61; 14 new members including 7 African American

In a January 2005 update on growth with diversity, there were 32 African Americans attending regularly. Of those, 25 were members. Total attendance by African Americans including children and youth was 52 with the RE program majority African American. Other new members identified as Asian, Hispanic, White. With 130 members, 28% identified as persons of color. From July 2004 through June 2005 the congregation had welcomed a total of 18 new members including 8 African Americans.

In September, the congregation ordained John Crestwell (who had been serving on the staff since fall 2003 as intern and Director of Outreach) and called him to be the first African American minister of the congregation. The Rev. Don Cameron-Kragt will conclude his ministry with a sabbatical beginning January 1, 2006, at which time John becomes the minister of the congregation. A capital campaign for support of the growth plan was undertaken in the fall.

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:

Houston Area:

Though that campaign concluded last May (reports are available on our web site at <http://www.uua.org/programs/congservices/uncommon/houston/>), ripple effects are being felt in many of our congregations. Resources using the second generation design of The Uncommon Denomination are available on line. The new postcards are proving to be very popular, and there is interest from various congregations in the tab insert as an outreach tool.

Times Square:

In the late fall we were offered the chance to advertise on the NBC Astrovision Screen in Times Square during the holidays. With the support of the Metro New York District staff and ministers of the 3 Manhattan congregations, Valerie Holton led the development of a 30 second spot using graphics from the Houston campaign. Thanks to generous donors to the UUA who continue to be

committed to sharing our faith through marketing, we raised the \$60,000 we needed. While we have asked the metro area congregations to track contacts as a result of the campaign, we see this largely as building awareness. During the period of the first run of the ad, the Times Square button on www.uua.org received over 4,000 hits. You can view the Times Square spot by going to <http://www.uua.org/programs/congservices/uncommon/nyc/> and clicking on the ad image.

Orange County, Long Beach and South Bay:

This campaign would serve the seven congregations in that area. A preliminary media plan of \$100,000 has already been presented to the congregations. A good portion (>50%) of those funds have already been committed. The campaign would include a mix of radio, direct mail and Sunday newspaper tabloid inserts. Valerie Holton, marketing consultant with the UUA has visited all the congregations, co-conducted with Ken Brown, District Executive, a “preparedness” workshop, and is working with the Roundtable members and Stewardship and Development to make a final determination on whether a campaign is feasible. (President’s Roundtable)

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) will be presented on February 11, 2006. A UU regional marketing group in the Bay Area currently exists and would support the outreach efforts. Valerie Holton conducted a Marketing Workshop in fall 2005 to begin to get the congregations to think strategically about marketing. (President’s Roundtable)