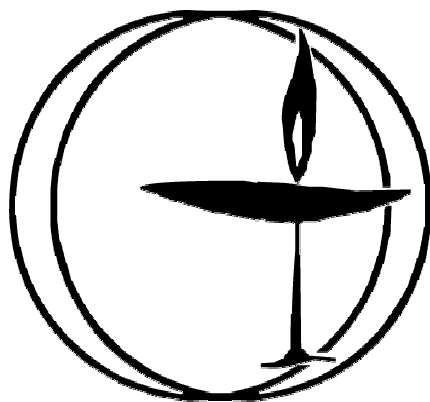


UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION
NEW CONGREGATION FORMATION TASK FORCE

FINAL REPORT
MAY 23, 2002



I. Introduction

Charge

The UUA Board of Trustees empowers the Congregational Properties and Loan Commission, in consultation with the Administration, to explore and make recommendations about ways in which the UUA can identify and encourage "best practices" for new congregation formation that will result in more rapid UUA growth. Land acquisition and planning for permanent congregational homes will be factors in the planning process. All review and examination should include an exploration of how current structures and policies encourage or challenge successful formation and growth of new congregations that may well be positioned to support the Association's anti-racist/anti-oppression agenda.

Task Force Participants

The New Congregation Formation Task Force members were recruited during the summer of 2001. Prospective members were selected to represent those who have had direct association with starting new congregations and those who have a particular interest in the topic. The following people agreed to be part of this task force:

Ms. Margaret L. Beard, UUA Extension Ministry Director,
 Dr. Wayne B. Clark, UUA Director of Congregational Fundraising Services,
 Rev. Dennis Hamilton, Senior Minister, Horizon UU Church in Carrollton, TX,
 Mr. Bob Johnsen, District Growth Consultant, Joseph Priestley District,
 Rev. Linda Olson Peebles, UUA Board of Trustees,
 Mr. John Pattillo, Chair, UUA Congregational Properties & Loan Commission,
 Ms. Sherry Smith, Member, UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, Manhasset, NY,
 Rev. Arvid Straube, Senior Minister, Eno River UU Fellowship in Durham, NC.

This report includes a summary of bold recommendations (including funding requirements) and a list of best practices to be utilized in the creation of new, multi-staff large congregations. In addition, a number of selected materials can be found in an addendum. When these bold recommendations are implemented they will completely revolutionize the growth strategies of Unitarian Universalism.

New congregation formation is one significant part of an overall congregational growth strategy. Because new congregations are starting fresh and do not have existing ways of being, they are uniquely poised to become anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and multi-cultural religious institutions.

II. Bold Recommendations

Bold Recommendation #1

We recommend the creation of ten multi-staff new congregations per year for each of the next five years. Each of these congregations will be substantial in their offerings and functioning and will include a full religious education program, a small group ministry program, and adequate training for all staff members. These multi-staff congregations will be intentionally planned with the vision of rapidly growing to large size. These congregations may be started as a new congregation sponsored by an existing congregation or as a part of a metropolitan growth strategy involving many existing congregations.

Other creative models might include the creation of a satellite church from an existing congregation, a focused constituency church (UU Christian, young adult, Spanish speaking, BGLT, etc.). These new congregations may also be a collaboratively (UUA and district) planted effort in a demographically viable area where there is not a natural local entity to start the effort.

The growth literature clearly indicates that for a religious movement to thrive, it must add at least 5% new congregations each year. With 1,049 UUA member congregations, this would mean starting 52 new congregations each year. Annually, ten to twelve new congregations have affiliated with the UUA. These numbers include congregations of all models and intention, including grass roots efforts, which tend to stay small, and intentional, new mid-size congregations. In addition to the small grass roots efforts that occur without much UUA or district involvement, it is clear that the Unitarian Universalist Association will need to focus on intentional, multi-staff new large congregations. It is also clear that we will need to provide extensive funding, training and staffing support.

Of these 50 new congregations the goal will be to create religious communities each growing to at least 1,500 to 3,000 adults within five years. These new congregations will focus on serving people who have not been not yet found Unitarian Universalism or been served by existing Unitarian Universalist congregations. UUA funds will need to be "front loaded" early in this process to support ministers, staff, operations, program development, land and facilities. Staff resources will be developed that will assure compatibility with large church organization. Because these efforts will require skills and experience not widely found in the Association, each staff team will require special training and support. If it is not possible for the staff team to be culturally and racially diverse, at minimum each staff will be multi-culturally competent. The organization will be team oriented and will emphasize flexibility and empowerment, rather than rigidity in structure.

Initial facilities should be large enough to accommodate early rapid growth. This goal might be accomplished with multiple worship services. The bylaws and organizational framework will be scalable to accommodate organizational growth. The congregation will offer full service programming, spiritual development for all ages, and will be involved in outreach and social justice consistent with Unitarian Universalist values.

Bold Recommendation #2

We recommend the establishment of milestones for the congregation's development and subsequent funding. We also recommend the use of clear criteria and evaluative measures to increase the chances of growing the Association, while wisely spending precious resources.

There are several stages of new congregation development. First, a local sponsoring entity will need to be identified. This local sponsoring entity will need to have the potential to initiate the planning stage for a new congregation. Second, a planning stage will include the creation of a local planning committee that involves key clergy and lay leaders, including district and UUA representatives. The creation of the planning committee is a key opportunity to increase racial and cultural diversity. The planning committee will develop a multi-year comprehensive strategic plan for the new, multi-staff congregation.

A comprehensive strategic plan will include a clear vision and mission created by the local sponsoring entity. The comprehensive strategic plan will also include a demographic study that supports the creation of a new multi-staff large congregation, a five-year financial plan, a specific staffing plan, and strategies to organize at least 300 adult participants before starting weekly worship. After a careful review of the comprehensive strategic plan, the UUA Congregational Services staff will provide feedback and will engage the planners in determining the next steps. These next steps might include funding approval or further clarification of the comprehensive strategic plan.

Third, the gathering stage will involve the evolution of the planning committee into a steering committee of twelve to sixteen members. The creation of the steering committee is another key opportunity to increase racial and cultural diversity. This steering committee will include people from the geographic location of the new congregation, clergy and lay leaders experienced in organizing new congregations, and district and UUA representatives. Measurable milestones will include a re-visitation of the comprehensive strategic plan and the hiring of a team leader who will, in turn, hire the remaining staff. Measurable milestones will also include the successful completion of initial gathering activities, the creation of five to twenty active small groups, and the gathering of at least 400 members at weekly worship.

There will be several additional stages of growth, with measurable milestones, in each new multi-staff large congregation. Each new congregation within the context of their own specific comprehensive strategic plan will determine these additional stages and subsequent measurable milestones. Continued funding will be contingent upon reaching these milestones.

Bold Recommendation #3

We recommend that the UUA Board support congregational growth through significant financial contributions from the Campaign for Unitarian Universalism. We further recommend the creation of a broad range of resources to support the creation and growth of new multi-staff large congregations.

Acceptance criteria for UUA funding will include a five-year financial plan, a detailed growth plan (including the proposed governance structure) and a realistic assessment of significant growth potential. Working in close relationship with the new congregation and the district, the UUA Congregational Services staff will review the progress of each new congregation's development and will be prepared to intervene financially and with specialized consultation to overcome the inevitable roadblocks.

These large congregations will need significant funding for initial training, staffing, and space. The UUA will need to expand existing grant and loan programs to meet the needs of these intentionally started new congregations. These additional financial resources will need to include land acquisition loans and

property acquisition for the future expansion of qualifying congregations. Serious consideration will need to be given to a land-banking program that anticipates future congregational growth.

The cost of implementing the recommendations is estimated to be between \$800,000 and \$1.2 million for each new congregation. This estimate represents total anticipated external funding needed, in excess of local congregational fundraising efforts, over a five-year period. This estimate also assumes that most of the external funding will be required during the very early stages of each new congregation. We anticipate that successful congregations will be both self-supporting and significant contributors to District and UUA funding by the fifth year of operation.

We predict that two-thirds of the new congregation expenses will consist of staff salaries. The remaining one-third of the costs will include expenses of the gathering process, program support, and facilities rental. In order to implement this multi-staff strategy, the hiring of at least two full time UUA program staff persons and one support staff person will be required.

Not surprisingly, our estimate indicates that the single most important variable in determining the actual external funding needs is the number of active participants committed to the financial support of the new congregation. It is very clear that adequate funding of the initial gathering process is critical to success. To a much lesser extent, our estimates are sensitive to the cost of rental facilities, which will vary considerably depending on regional location.

We believe these estimates are realistic, but will need to be refined by the UUA staff as part of a more detailed implementation process.

Bold Recommendation #4

We recommend that the UUA take an active role, in cooperation with districts, in providing funding resources for the creation of new multi-staff large congregations. We further recommend that districts take a lead role, including providing funding resources, for the creation of grass roots and spin-off congregations under 250 members.

The respective roles of the districts and the UUA will be distinct and interdependent within a close working relationship. It will be especially important to include extension committees in the proactive planning for intentional, strategic growth, and to develop local and district resources to supplement UUA resources. To encourage the establishment of multi-staff large congregations, the UUA, in collaboration with districts, will be proactive in identifying prime areas for new geographic locations and to plan and implement this initiative.

The districts will provide the first level of consultation and financial support for smaller grass roots and spin-off congregations. In this effort, the UUA will play a supportive role by offering growth training to district staff and key volunteer leaders, trainer of trainer programs, and other consultation resources. The UUA Congregational Services staff will develop "stand alone" web resources for new, smaller congregations.

Some district extension committees will need to be developed and others will need to be strengthened or refined. The goal of district extension committees will be to develop intentional, strategic growth

strategies for new congregations, as well as for existing congregations. These strategies will also include the identification and development of district and local financial resources. (For example, emphasis will need to be placed on the initiation or expansion of Chalice Lighter programs to increase the dollars available for the support of new congregations. The creation of district endowments will also support this growth initiative.)

All district field staff will need to possess a commitment to growth and to anti-racism, anti-oppression and multi-culturalism (AR/AO/MC). Members of district boards, key committees and nominating committees will need to be exposed to the best practices of congregational growth and all aspects of anti-oppression, anti-racism, and multi-culturalism.

III. Best Practices For Beginning Multi-Staff Large Congregations

The following information has been gathered from a wide variety of sources, including historical data from successful Unitarian Universalist congregations, congregations from several other denominations, current UUA new congregation formation practice and the anecdotal experiences of the task force members.

The information represents a list of best practices to consider when beginning multi-staff large congregations.

Association support

- Thriving, vital denominations assume a strong leadership position in growing new congregations. To do this they start 5% of the total number of their current congregations each year. They support this effort with significant funds and staff support. The Unitarian Universalist Association will need to follow this example.

Vision, Mission, and Covenant

- New congregations will begin with a clear vision for sharing the good news of Unitarian Universalism. These congregations will be learning and teaching religious communities and they will be mission focused.
- New congregations will serve a specific demographic niche. Ministries will be organized to serve this population.
- Marketing of the new congregation will be intentional and comprehensive

Professional Staff

- In recognition of their shared ministry, the parish minister and the religious education professional will create a covenant to address all aspects of their shared ministry.

- Each new large congregation will begin with a core staff team, including a full time parish minister, religious education professional, office administrator and a part-time third professional (musician, youth/young adult minister, membership coordinator, etc.)
- Each staff team will be focused on providing congregational services to at least 300 adults. A primary objective of this team will be to promote this growth.
- Each core staff team will have a clearly designated core team leader, responsible to the steering committee/congregation's board and the UUA for the initial operation of the staff team. The team leader will have the authority to hire and fire staff members (with the exception of called clergy). The team leader will be responsible for evaluating each staff member and for reporting those evaluations to the board. In turn, the team leader will be evaluated each year by the board.
- Generally, the team leader will be the parish minister. The team leader will be an experienced religious leader, with a clear vision for, and commitment to creating a large congregation.
- The staff team will work closely with an external, independent consultant on a consistent, on-going basis.
- There will be a clear, written personnel policy describing benefits, vacation, sick leave, grievance policies, and other essential personnel issues for each member of the staff team.
- Salary and benefit levels for the core staff team will meet or exceed the UUA guidelines. Compensation will reflect experience and responsibilities but no staff member will be paid more than 20% more than the next highest paid staff member.

Lay Leadership

- Lay leaders will be strong and well trained, with a clear vision of creating a multi-staff large congregation. It will be especially helpful if key lay leaders have experience in large churches.
- On going training will be provided for all lay leaders.

Worship Services

- The worship service(s) will be high quality and intentionally welcoming to unchurched members. Meeting times and practices will allow people to be honored and welcomed, regardless of their economic, educational, and racial/cultural identities.
- The worship service(s) will provide flexible imagery, music, ritual, recreational activities, and governance to achieve inclusion of persons with theological compatibility but cultural incompatibility with traditional Unitarian Universalism. (see text below)

- The worship service(s) will provide flexible imagery, music, ritual, to achieve inclusion of persons with theological compatibility but perceived cultural incompatibility with traditional Unitarian Universalism but not in every congregation
- Well defined and nurtured covenant groups and other small group ministries will be an integral part of each new large congregation.

Financial Resources

- The district Chalice Lighters' programs will be supported to significantly increase the amount of money available for new, multi-staff large congregations.
- District endowments will be created to support the development of multi-staff large congregations

Training and Support

- Uniquely specialized training will be provided for all staff team members and all congregational lay leaders.
- Specialized training will also be provided for district field staff and extension committee members.
- Existing large UU congregations will be encouraged to work as partners/leaders in creating new, large congregations.
- Intervention resources will be available to help guide and coach those new congregations that experience difficulty. These intervention resources will be available on very short notice.

Facilities

- Adequate, high quality seven-day a week space, whether rented or purchased, will be provided on the first day of operation.

Evaluation and Accountability

- Each new congregation will create a specific, written, on-going evaluation process. Each congregation will make an annual report to the UUA Congregational Services staff team.

Appendix A Stakeholders Contacted

Association of Unitarian Universalist Administrators

Bill Sinkford

UUA staff

Continental Unitarian Universalist Young Adult Network

District Presidents Association

Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries

Faith in Action/Journey toward Wholeness

Field Staff

Liberal Religious Educators' Association

LUUNA

Meadville/Lombard Theological School

Ministers of Large UU Congregations

Starr King Theological School

Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship

Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association

UUMN

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists

Appendix B Resource List

Alexander, Scott, Ed., *Salted with Fire: Unitarian Universalist Strategies for Sharing Faith and Growing Congregations*. Skinner House Books, Boston, 1994.

Callahan, Kennon L., *Building For Effective Mission: A Complete Guide for Congregations on Bricks and Mortar Issues*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1991.

Callahan, Kennon L., *Effective Church Finances: Fund-Raising and Budgeting for Church Leaders*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1992.

Callahan, Kennon L., *Effective Church Leadership: Building on the Twelve Keys*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1995.

Callahan, Kennon L., *Giving and Stewardship in an Effective Church: A Guide for Every Member*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1990.

- Callahan, Kennon L., *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1990.
- Clapp, Steve, *Overcoming Barriers to Church Growth*, The Andrew Center, Elgin, IL, 1994.
- Clapp, Steve, *Plain Talk About Church Growth*. Brethren Press, Elgin, IL, 1989.
- George, Carl, *Prepare Your Church for the Future*. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1991.
- George, Carl, with Warren Bird, *How to Break Growth Barriers: Capturing Overlooked Opportunities for Church Growth*. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1996.
- Hadaway, C. Kirk, *Church Growth Principles: Separating Fact From Fiction*. Broadman Press, Nashville, TN, 1991.
- Huttenlocker, Keith, *Conflict and Caring: Preventing, Managing and Resolving Conflict in the Church*. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1988.
- Lehman, James H., *Thank God For New Churches! Church Planting---Source of New Life*. Brethren Press, Elgin, IL, 1984.
- Logan, Robert E., *Beyond Church Growth: Action Plans For Developing A Dynamic Church*. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1989.
- Mann, Alice, *The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transitions in Congregations*. The Alban Institute, 1998.
- Mead, Loren B., *More Than Numbers: The Way Churches Grow*. The Alban Institute, 1993.
- Oswald, Roy M. and Robert E. Friedrich, Jr., *Discerning Your Congregation's Future: A Strategic and Spiritual Approach*. The Alban Institute, 1996.
- Oswald, Roy M. and Speed Leas, *The Inviting Church: A Study of New Member Assimilation*. The Alban Institute, 1987.
- Ott, E. Stanley, *The Vibrant Church: A People Building Plan for Congregational Health*. Regal Books, Ventura, CA, 1989.
- Reeves, R. Daniel, and Ronald Jenson, *Always Advancing: Modern Strategies for Church Growth*. Here's Life Publishers, San Bernadino, CA, 1984.
- Rendle, Gilbert R., *Leading Change in the Congregation*. The Alban Institute, 1998.
- Roozen, David A. and C. Kirk Hadaway, *Church and Denominational Growth: What does (and Does Not) Cause Growth or Decline*. Abingdon Press, 1993.
- Schaller, Lyle E., *Assimilating New Members*. Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1978.
- Schaller, Lyle E., *The Seven-Day-a-Week Church*. Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1992.

Steinke, Peter L., *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*. The Alban Institute, 1993.

Towns, Elmer L., John N. Vaughan, and David J. Seifert. *The Complete Book of Church Growth*. Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL, 1981.

Wagner, C. Peter, *Leading Your Church to Growth*. Regal Books, Ventura, CA, 1984.

Wagner, C. Peter, *Your Church Can Grow*. Regal Books, Ventura, CA, 1984.

Warren, Rick, *The Purpose Driven Church*. Zondervan Publishing House, Los Angeles, CA, 1995.

Appendix C

Guidelines for Training of New Congregation Teams

Training Objective #1

The UUA Congregational Services staff will facilitate several days of team building and team covenanting.

Training Objective #2

UUA Staff will also offer training in healthy church, safe congregations and anti-racism/anti-oppression/multi-culturalism.

Training Objective #3

Once a year staff of the new large congregations will come together to receive continuing education and share experiences.

Training Objective #4

A thorough understanding of the theory and practice of church planting and large congregation ministry will be provided. The UUA Congregational Services staff will take a customized version of their multiple staff church planting training to the local site. This training will be supplemented by reading and discussion of many resources including, but not limited to the following. Please refer to the attached addenda for a list of additional resources.

- 44 Questions For Church Planters, by Lyle Schaller
- The Very Large Church, by Lyle Schaller

- The Coming Church Revolution, by Carl George
- Staff Your Church For Growth, by Gary McIntosh
- Habits of Highly Effective Churches, by George Barna.

Training Objective #5

In order to gain experience observing and working in a successful large church setting, the staff team will "shadow" their counterpart in an existing congregation for a period of one to three months. Placement churches will be growth-oriented congregations that have a demonstrated commitment to Unitarian Universalism. These placement churches will also possess a growth track record, an excellent cradle-to-grave religious education program, and a professional team that works well together.

Training Objective #6

The staff team will receive extensive training in all aspects of church financial management. Components of this training will include, but not be limited to the following:

- Effective church accounting procedures,
- Creation of an annual operating budget,
- Successful annual stewardship campaign techniques,
- Development of long range financial plans,
- Creation of an active endowment program.
- Strategic planning

Training Objective #7

Staff team members will be provided information about marketing. Attendance at a non-UUA-sponsored church marketing workshop may be offered.