



# An Imaginary Timeline

## *Detailing a Strategy for the Organizing the Church of the Free Spirit, Unitarian Universalist, in Northeast Tarrant County, Texas*

*Preliminary Draft – January 2003*

<p><b>July 2002</b></p>	<p><i>The Metropolitan Strategy for Growth</i> is completed as a strategic plan for Unitarian Universalist growth and extension in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. The project is supported by the Southwest UU Conference (SWUUC), the North Texas Association of UU Societies (NTAUUS), the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and their member congregations in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.</p>
<p><b>August 2002</b></p>	<p>The Ministerial Search Committee meets to begin the process of identifying the Senior Minister who will lead the staff team in organizing an intentionally large new UU congregation in Northeast Tarrant County.</p>
<p><b>December 2002</b></p>	<p>The Ministerial Search Committee completes preparation of the <i>Ministerial Search Packet</i>, posts the congregational record sheet to the UUA Settlement System web site, and begins identifying and recruiting potential candidates.</p>
<p><b>January 2003</b></p>	<p>An Administrator begins work for the Growth Steering Committee and the UUA, whose responsibilities include supporting, arranging or directly accomplishing the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a legal, tax-exempt entity;</li> <li>• Locating temporary space for start-up;</li> <li>• Locating site for first permanent church building;</li> <li>• Establishing a temporary office and setting up necessary system to ensure a smooth start-up;</li> <li>• Executing the initial marketing plan.</li> </ul>
<p><b>January 2003</b></p>	<p>The Ministerial Search Committee begins the initial review of applicants, selecting suitable applicants with whom to exchange packets.</p>
<p><b>February 2003</b></p>	<p>The Ministerial Search Committee identifies three or four ministerial candidates to interview.</p>
<p><b>February 2003</b></p>	<p>In collaboration with the Large Church Startup (LCS) Task Force, the Administrator oversees the implementation of the</p>

	<p>marketing plan. The LCS Task Force focuses on selecting a name for the new congregation, testing various possibilities in focus groups drawn from existing UU congregations and target constituencies, while the Administrator attends to the nuts-and-bolts of the marketing plan.</p> <p>The Administrator initiates cultivation of media contacts, assembles preliminary materials for press kits, prepares media for coming announcement of the selection of the Senior Minister.</p>
<b>March 2003</b>	The Ministerial Search Committee selects a candidate and recommends her/him for appointment as Senior Minister.
<b>Early April 2003</b>	<p>Selection of Senior Minister announced. Successful candidate begins completing ministry in present settlement (if applicable) and making arrangements to relocated to Dallas/Fort Worth area (if necessary).</p> <p>The LCS Task Force announces a name for the new congregation in keeping with the principles outlined in the marketing plan (i.e., Appendix IV of <i>The Metropolitan Strategy for Growth</i>).</p>
<b>April 2003</b>	Search begins for a full-time Religious Educator.
<b>Late April 2003</b>	A web site infrastructure is in place on the Internet, so that the “Virtual Church of the Free Spirit” is in place for the arrival of the Senior Minister. Once it is fully underway, new content will appear at least twice weekly to ensure that visitors return to the web site regularly.
<b>May 2003</b>	The identity materials are unveiled – logo and letterhead, newsletter design, web design, signage, and introductory brochures.
<b>May 2003</b>	Direct mail campaign begins in the target area – “Coming soon to a spiritual void near you,” or some such approach.
<b>June 2003</b>	Land is selected and the acquisition process is underway.
<b>June 2003</b>	The Administrator finalizes the identification of suitable venues for holding meetings of various sizes and negotiates availability and rates with the owners or managers of the facilities.
<b>August 2003</b>	<p>Senior Minister begins work in NE Tarrant County.</p> <p>Search for a permanent Administrator begins. The Senior Minister will first determine whether or not to invite the Contract Administrator to consider the permanent position.</p>

<b>September 2003</b>	<p>Religious Educator begins work in NE Tarrant County. The Senior Minister and Religious Educator begin recruiting participants for the first covenant group.</p> <p>The ministers of neighboring congregations undertake to identify existing members and friends of their congregations who are potential constituents of the new congregation. They arrange for forums in their churches to introduce the Senior Minister and Religious Educator to prospective members of the new congregation.</p> <p>“A Start-up Weekend Unlike Any Other” – Facilitated by the UUA Large Church Coordinator and SWUUC District Staff, the staff of the new congregation join with staff and lay leaders of existing DFW congregations to launch and bless the NE Tarrant County extension enterprise.</p>
<b>September 2003 to June 2004</b>	<p>The Senior Minister guest preaches at UU congregations across the Metroplex as part of the strategy for building the potential member base by (i) cultivating existing UUs who might find the new congregation to be better suited to their needs and (ii) raising the project’s visibility so that UUs with friends or relatives in NE Tarrant County encourage them to become involved. Prospect information will be gathered at these guest appearances. These services will be broadcast live at the “Virtual Church of the Free Spirit” web site and archived there.</p> <p>At the same time, the Senior Minister seeks invitations to visit neighboring churches, synagogues and other spiritual communities in NE Tarrant County to cultivate good relations and raise awareness of the new congregation.</p>
<b>September or October 2003</b>	<p>The staff team participates in large church specific trainings to expand their skills and further develop strategies for the new start. Possible sites or agencies for this training include but are not limited to: The Alban Institute, Asbury Theological Seminary, The Leadership Network, or other large Unitarian Universalist congregations.</p>
<b>October 2003</b>	<p>Search begins for Youth Minister/Leader and Music Director, hiring to be completed by the end of the year.</p>
<b>October 2003</b>	<p>Senior Minister and Religious Educator convene the first covenant group, drawing together individuals who will each become (i) convenors of covenant groups as they emerge and (ii) likely leaders of the new congregation when it is formally organized.</p>

	The target is for the number of covenant groups to double every two months until there are 300-400 individuals participating in 30-40 covenant groups by the end of the first year.
<b>November 2003</b>	The first public informational meeting is held to explain Unitarian Universalism and unveil the plan for a new congregation to residents of NE Tarrant County. Attendees will be encouraged to become involved in a covenant group and visit neighboring UU churches to become familiar with our faith. These public forums will continue on a regular basis, with particular attention being paid to developing the database of interested individuals.  Outdoor Thanksgiving Gathering on the future building site if it has been acquired; otherwise, the use of a park or other suitable place will be secured.
<b>January 2004</b>	At the latest, the Speaker Series begins, bringing in high quality, high calibre Unitarian Universalists to address well-publicized public gatherings. (Possibilities: Christopher Reeve, Robert Fulghum, Forrest Church, Mary Pipher, Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Bill Sinkford, John Buehrens, Marilyn Sewell, Sara York, etc.)
<b>January 2004</b>	Children's Religious Education program is launched in rented space, utilizing teachers seconded by neighboring congregations. Adult education begins at the same time.
<b>January or February 2004</b>	Music Director and Youth Minister/Leader join the staff team.  The Music Director begins gathering a choir from among the individuals expressing interest in the new congregation. The choir sings, at first, for no other reason than their own enjoyment but by spring they are singing in public venues. Youth Minister begins youth gatherings, utilizing covenant groups as one of the key organizing principles of the emerging youth program.
<b>February or March 2004</b>	Congregational Steering Committee established to assume the responsibilities of the LCS Task Force and lay the groundwork for the formal organization of the congregation.
<b>April 2004</b>	Earliest likely date for the first public worship service, provided we can be reasonably certain of having <i>at least 300 individuals in attendance</i> . (If a critical mass develops before April, an earlier date will be concerned, <i>but only if we can be certain of <u>attendance</u> surpassing 300.</i> )

<b>April to June 2004</b>	An architect is engaged to draft plans for a facility that will be developed in three or four distinct phases.
<b>May to December 2004</b>	The congregation is formally organized and affiliated with the UUA and SWUUC sometime during this period. Individuals will be encouraged to join within six months of the organization date to be recognized as charter members. A financial canvass will be run concurrent with the process of formal organization.
<b>October 2004</b>	Covenant group participation reaches 300-400 adults in 30-40 different groups. In addition to participating in whole group activities, 60-80 youth are involved in 6-8 age-distinct covenant groups.
<b>November 2004</b>	Latest desirable date for the first public worship service, though the attendance target remains 300+.
<b>January 2005</b>	Adult membership – 350; average adult attendance – 600. Children registered – 140; average attendance – 200.
<b>February to April 2005</b>	“First Fruits” Capital Campaign to raise the funds necessary to begin construction of the physical plant. This will be the first of three likely capital drives during the first decade or so of the congregation’s existence.
<b>June 2005</b>	Ground is broken for construction of the first phase of the congregation’s new facility.
<b>December 2005</b>	New facility is occupied and dedicated.
<b>January 2006</b>	Adult membership – 600; average adult attendance – 750. Children registered – 200; average attendance – 250.