

## Joseph Priestley District

### Policy Name: New Congregation Development

**Date: March 25, 2005**

**Policy:** Any new Unitarian Universalist congregation that is forming in the Joseph Priestley District and wishes to affiliate with the district and the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations must develop and adopt the following items to be considered for affiliation in addition to the requirements stipulated in the Unitarian Universalist Association bylaws:

1. Congregational Vision – It should answer the question of who do they see themselves becoming in the future five to ten years out. A vision statement answers the question: “What are our dreams? What do we want this congregation to look like in five years?” It includes specific, measurable objectives, achievable in a prescribed amount of time. For example: “We envision that the East Cupcake Unitarian Universalist Congregation will serve 250 adults and 125 children by the year 2000. We envision our buildings to be accessible to wheelchairs on all floors of our building, that we will serve the diversity of our town as proactively as we can, that we will have seven affinity groups that will meet monthly, that we will move to two Sunday morning services as we prepare for a larger building and the capital campaign that it requires. We envision hiring a half-time professional religious educator and a half-time church coordinator in addition to our minister.”
2. Congregational Mission – It should answer the question of why they exist. A mission statement expresses the mission of the congregation in a memorable way that is brief and to the point. A mission statement says who we are and what we value. It says, given who we are, here is our social contract and this is how we will make congregational life more meaningful. It uses active rather than passive verbs and clearly states what good we want to do in the world and with whom. For example: “Our mission is to foster an inclusive caring community focused on personal spiritual development and service to Southern Maryland and the greater community.—The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Southern Maryland.” A congregation’s mission, deeply felt, shines out of its members’ eyes. It informs their work as a religious community so that members of the congregation—and the larger community—know who they are and what they stand for. A congregation that cares only about itself may need corrective lenses so that it will see farther than its own walls.
3. Congregational Covenant – Covenants answer how a community of faith will be with one another. Covenants are promises to follow, not rules prescribing punishment. Covenants describe behaviors, not personality changes. Covenants are a daily, spiritual practice. Covenants can be used to monitor behaviors of leaders by periodically reviewing the covenant. Covenants can be used by leaders to model healthy and faithful behavior to others in the congregation and the community. “We, the members of The Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley, covenant with each other: to

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encourage spiritual growth, intellectual stimulation, and the search for truth and meaning; to build a supportive church community by being honest, acting with integrity, and trusting each other; to show respect for and open our minds to each other, our viewpoints, and our individual differences; to enjoy fellowship and fun; to participate enthusiastically in our church life; and to serve our community through outreach and social action.”

4. Congregational Long Range Plan – A long range plan should specify in detail the activities and goals for the next three to five years which will lead the congregation to be a “full service congregation” in its community. If the plan is not to become a "full service congregation" the reasons why not should be clearly stated. The long-range plan should include the congregation’s several ministries (worship, life-span faith development, pastoral ministry to members, ministry to the community, and putting one’s faith in action) as well as the organizational elements to support that ministry (staff, facilities, membership, etc.) and the financing plan to fund the ministries and support elements. A comprehensive plan details projected growth toward fulfilling the vision and mission of the congregation in the many areas of congregational life.

5. Full Fair Share with JPD and UUA – Every congregation needs to be in right relationship with the larger faith community of Unitarian Universalism. This includes being financially supportive of the UUA and the JPD at a full fair share of the annual requests for support. The congregation will promise to be in right relationship and indicate that relationship by committing its funds for denominational support at the level that had been agreed upon by the last year’s national and district assemblies. Depending upon when the application is made, the amount for the current fiscal year will be prorated to the closest quarter year date.

These items are to be developed in concert with the help of the JPD Staff who bring expertise in guiding congregations. The District Executive in consultation with the Director of Growth and Extension and the Growth and Extension Committee will review the submitted documents. When they are complete and accurate the District Executive will make a recommendation to the JPD Board to approve the application for membership in the UUA. When the Board has approved the congregation’s application, this approval will be communicated to the leadership of the congregation as soon as practical by the District Executive.