

Oct. 9, 2004

**Final Report**  
for the  
**Philadelphia/Wilmington**  
**Metropolitan Growth Committee**  
from  
**the New Church Task Force**

I. Introduction

The New Large Church Task Force is an outgrowth of the Main Line Unitarian Church Growth Committee, which had been in existence for several years before it was expanded into the Task Force. The MLUC Growth Committee was formed to make plans to accommodate growth at MLUC. This committee looked at possibilities for acquiring contiguous or nearby land, and remodeling the parsonage and/or the main building to provide more classrooms and office space. This included architectural studies. After a couple of years, the final conclusion was that without more land, expansion of the facility at Devon was not an effective way to proceed. No land was currently available.

The report of the MLUC Growth Committee to the MLUC Board of Trustees was that

A. MLUC should continue to seek more nearby land and

B. MLUC should start a new church west of Devon in the triangle Malvern, Exton, Phoenixville. A "Percept" demographic study of that area was purchased through the UUA and it showed that it was a fast growing area with demographics very similar to the area around MLUC.

At about this time, the Philadelphia/Wilmington Metro Plan Committee was being formed. The MLUC Growth Committee paused in its work for about a year to see how the new Metro Committee would perceive and mesh with MLUC's plans. The members of the MLUC Growth Committee were pleased to be invited by the Metroplan to become the nucleus of the Metroplan New Large Church Task Force. Members of the Task Force were added from the other congregations surrounding the target area (West Chester, Pottstown, and Thomas Paine). Planning went ahead for establishing a new large church in the general area of the Malvern, Exton, Phoenixville triangle or somewhat further to the west. Contact was made with the new large church being formed in the Dallas area through a

visit to the area and a talk with their administrator; and receipt of their weekly electronic newsletter. Several visits by Tracey Robinson-Harris the UUA person for growth of new churches were encouraging.

A draft strategic plan for the new large church was published in June of 2004 along with a draft budget (attached). The plan visualizes a favorable congregational vote on sponsoring a new church at the MLUC Annual Meeting on Nov. 14, 2004. Immediately after that vote, a search committee to find a Senior Minister will be formed. The new minister will be in place in the summer of 2005 and would immediately hire an MRE or DRE and a church administrator. Office and conference room space will be rented and the gathering process begins in the fall of 2005.

The plan visualizes the New Church as an independent organization with its own culture. It is expected to have a policy governance structure from the outset.

In the first year or so, MLUC can help by furnishing the legal and administrative basis for operation, for example in payroll, benefits, and administrative processes. MLUC procedures and software can be used until the New Church establishes its own. MLUC can also help in RE curriculum, Small Group Ministries Facilitators, Adult Education courses, musicians, pulpit exchanges, and many other details relieving the New Church from having to start all these from scratch. It is believed this can be done without unduly affecting the culture of the New Church, especially if it is understood in the beginning that the New Church is not to be a clone of MLUC.

There are ways that MLUC and other congregations will in turn benefit from a nearby large church. Besides the general lifting of awareness of Unitarian Universalism in the area, there can be joint Social Action projects, interaction between youth and young adult groups, pulpit exchanges, joint advertising, and probably many other joint undertakings.

## 2. Recommendations:

It is recommended that the New Large Church Task Force be authorized and encouraged by the Philadelphia/Wilmington Metropolitan Growth Committee to proceed to start a New Large Church along the lines contained in the Jun 2004 draft Strategic Plan. (a final strategic plan awaits the hiring and arrival of the new senior minister.) It is further recommended that any area-wide advertising be coordinated with advertising campaigns aimed at the New Church target area as part of the gathering process, thus getting maximum effect all around for scarce advertising dollars.

## 3. What will success look like?

Success will be a new church of at least 300 members with an aggressive growth agenda in place and operating by fall of 2006 with plans and funding for a building of its own.

## 4. Challenges

The first challenge is finding the right senior minister. Preferably, this would be someone or a team with an evangelistic fire in their belly and some experience in UU churches in their resume. This person or team is crucial.

Secondly, operating funding is somewhat of a challenge, although the budget and sources of operating revenue seem reasonable if the UUA and JPD come through with expected money. There are already good indications that donor funding will be available. The biggest challenge in operating funding is expected to be getting new member pledging off to a good start.

Third, a major challenge is getting a building. At this time, there is no clear path to this goal. A hopeful sign is the pledging of about one half million dollars in gifts and low interest loans for the purchase of land for the new church. An offer was made for some land that looked good, but it fell through. This search for land is now on the back burner, although if an ideal piece showed up it could be pursued.

The projected establishment of a JPD endowment fund to help in building purchase is another hopeful sign, but this seems to be far in the future. Building purchase seems to be

a large obstacle with no ready solution. We are encouraged, however, by the Mill Creek and Frederick congregations who recently managed new buildings on their own.

## 5. Resources Needed

- a. People. Besides the Senior Minister, MRE/DRE and Church Administrator professionals mentioned above, we need dedicated volunteers who will take part in this most rare adventure. The current new Church Task Force is expected to be the nucleus of this set of volunteers at first. About 75 current MLUC members reside in the target area. It is expected some of these will join the New Church (maybe 25?). Otherwise, the gathering process will bring in the rest.
- b. Money. As outlined in the budget for the draft Strategic Plan, \$250,000 is expected from the UUA, \$100,000 from the JPD Chalice Lighters, \$150-200,000 from donors, \$15,000 a year from MLUC for 5 years (total \$75,000) with the balance from New church member pledges for an independent unsubsidized congregation in 5 years.
- c. Materials. No extraordinary material needs are anticipated other than those used in the normal course of church operations.

## 6. Time Line.

- a. MLUC approval to act as sponsor: Nov. 14, 2004
- b. Search Committee formed: Dec. 2004
- c. Senior Minister on board: July 2005
- d. Church administrator on board: Aug 2005
- e. Rental Facility: Aug 2005
- f. MRE/DRE on board: Sep 2005
- g. Gathering Process starts Sep 2005
- h. Formal Start of New Church: Sep 2006

## New Congregation Task Force Strategic Plan Philadelphia/Wilmington Metroplan

I. VISION. The New Congregation Task Force of the Philadelphia/Wilmington Metroplan will start a new large church in or near the area defined by the triangle Malvern, Exton and Phoenixville. Initially the new church will be operated administratively by the Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon. When the new church is of sufficient size and is well organized in its own right (estimated to take 2 or 3 years), it will formally separate and become an independent church.

II. BACKGROUND. The area to the west and northwest of Main Line Unitarian Church (MLUC) is one of the fastest growing areas in the metropolitan area and there is no indication that this growth will stop in the near future. Also, the demographics of this area are similar to the Main Line and other communities that support strong UU churches, thus it is a prime area for the New Congregation Task Force to direct its growth efforts for a new large church based on an MLUC approach and aid. MLUC was started by a group of visionaries who wanted to make Unitarianism available in their community. Further, they wanted high levels of ministry, programming, RE and music. In a series of leaps of faith and hard work the church has grown steadily and has gained national recognition for its achievements. In addition, by active participation at the district and national levels, Chalice Lighters, and the Partner Church program, MLUC has made significant contributions to making Unitarianism Universalism available in other areas as well.

III. MISSION STATEMENT: The New Congregation Task Force of the Philadelphia/Wilmington Metroplan will establish a large, full-service UU congregation for people living in the rapidly developing area of north-central Chester County (i.e., from Malvern west to Downingtown, and from US route 30 north to PA route 23).

- A. The New Church will start with administrative aid and mentoring from MLUC. After a start up period of 2 to 3 years, the new church will separate from MLUC and become an independent church in its own right.
- B. The New Church will receive financial help from MLUC, the UUA, and the JPD, and advice and aid from three surrounding congregations (West Chester, Thomas Paine, and Pottstown), who are invited to send full time members of the Task Force.
- C. From the beginning, the New Church will have full ministerial, RE, and music programs.
- D. After an organizational period of approximately one year, during which interested participants will be “gathered”, the founding membership will consist of a minimum of 300 people.
- E. The work of the Task Force will be integrated with other activities of the Philadelphia/Wilmington Metroplan Committee, such as the area-wide advertising and training for integrating new members.

IV. PLANNING: The planning phase has already begun within the Philadelphia/Wilmington New Church Task Force in terms of discussions within MLUC, the Metroplan Committee, the JPD Extension Committee, the UUA and surrounding fellowships. Efforts are also underway to find suitable space (purchase or rental) to begin the gathering process. Looking to the future, the Chester County Unitarian Universalist Real Estate Trust is being formed with an eye towards purchasing and holding land for the future New Church. Steps in starting a New Church:

- A. MLUC Approval
  - 1. Education of congregation and staff
  - 2. Approval of the congregation Nov 2004
- B. Funding
  - 1. MLUC Funding, \$15K/yr for 5 yrs = \$75K
  - 2. JPD Funding, 6 CL grants in 3 yrs = \$120K
  - 3. UUA Funding, \$250K over 3 yrs
  - 4. Donor Funding, \$200K over 5 yrs, UUA help in fund raising
  - 5. Pledges of New Church members, \$985,000 over 5 yrs.

### C. STAFF

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1.Full time, growth oriented, experienced minister | Aug 2005 |
| 2.Full time UU growth oriented administrator       | Aug 2005 |
| 3.Full time Director of Religious Education        | Sep 2005 |
| 4.Quarter time music director                      | Jan 2006 |

### D. SPACE

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| 1.Rented office with conference room                          | Aug 2005 |
| 2.Hall and classrooms for Sunday ingatherings (begin once/mo) | Jan 2006 |

### E. ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION IN CONJUNCTION WITH METROPLAN

- |                        |          |
|------------------------|----------|
| 1.Website              | Sep 2005 |
| 2.Radio and newspapers | Oct 2005 |
| 3.Public meetings      | Oct 2005 |
| 4. Billboards          | Jan 2006 |

### F. PROCESS

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| 1.Hire staff   | Nov 2004-Sep 2005 |
| 2.Rent office and meeting/RE rooms   | Aug 2005          |
| 3.Begin gathering process  | Sep 2005          |
| a. Cadre of 25 to 50 current MLUC members ready to go                                  | Sep 2005          |
| b. Put together website (volunteer)  | Jul-Aug 2005      |
| c. Advertising campaign begins   | Sep 2005          |
| d. Small groups begin  | Nov 2005          |
| e. Adult RE programs, childrens RE programs, youth events                              | Nov 2005          |
| ongoing  |                   |
| f. Pot luck suppers, circle suppers  | “                 |
| g. Concerts, choirs, instrumental concerts   | “                 |
| h. Newspaper column in local newspaper   | “                 |
| i. Chat room on the Web  | “                 |
| j. Monthly Sunday ingatherings (100 people involved)<br>includes RE and Youth programs | Jan 2005          |
| k. Famous speakers on Sunday mornings  | Oct 2005          |
| l.Charter new church @ 300 members   | Jan 2007          |
| m. Seek permanent space @ 400 members  | Jan 2008          |
| n.First stewardship campaign   | Jan 2006          |
- However all new members pledge as they sign up

### G. ORGANIZATION

The steps for starting a new church are being implemented by the Philadelphia/Wilmington New Church Task Force. This Task Force is a

continuation of the work of the Main Line Unitarian Church Growth Committee and will continue to operate as a committee of the Main Line Unitarian Church with representation from the three other UU Fellowships surrounding the target area: West Chester, Pottstown, and Colledgeville (Thomas Paine). As staff is hired and the new church organization is prepared to take on responsibility, implementation tasks will be turned over when they are ready. In the meantime, the Task Force is endeavoring to recruit more MLUC members in the target area who will be ready to transfer their knowledge and expertise to the new church. Thus, it is planned to have a number of people ready to become active and knowledgeable members of the new church from the very beginning. In addition, the MLUC administrative procedures, such as pay roll, bookkeeping, disbursement of funds, church records, newsletter processing, etc. can be used right away until the new church is ready to take over. A new set of accounts will be set up in the MLUC financial system for the new church. RE curriculum, teacher recruitment, classroom procedures and policies at MLUC can be used at the new church. For the first year, MLUC By-Laws and laws of incorporation will be used. The new staff will be legally members of the MLUC staff, but will be expected to operate independently, except for such interactive help as needed and appropriate.

#### H. STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES

1. Senior Minister – this person will have several years experience in a mid-size to large UU church, be oriented toward growth and large church operation, have the personality and capability to act as the executive of large and complex church operation, while at the same time acting as the principal spiritual leader.

From the beginning, the Senior Minister will act as the Chief Executive Officer and as the New Church grows it is planned that a Carver type organization will be formed. The CEO will be in charge of operations, while the Board of Trustees makes policy. The primary goal of the Senior Minister will be to grow the New Church into a large church with excellent programming for a broad range of interests and desires fitting within a lively UU community.

2. Director of Religious Education – this person will have several years successful experience directing the life span religious education program of a mid-size or large UU church, be oriented toward growth and development of RE in a large church. This person may be an ordained UU minister or a layperson with background in teaching or child development or other appropriate education and experience.

The DRE will develop a life span RE program for all age levels, expanding as the New Church grows. It is expected at the beginning many resources will be available from MLUC to help in this. The

DRE will help in organizing small group ministries and other church building activities.

3. Administrator – this person must be familiar with operations in a large UU church (MLUC preferable) and consider themselves part of the outreach program of the New Church. The administrator in the beginning will conduct the business affairs of the New Church, set up the new office, put out a newsletter, schedule events, and generally be in charge of the office. As the church grows it is expected the job will grow to be an Executive Director in charge of all staff operations below the ministerial level.
4. Music Director – At first it is expected that volunteer musicians from MLUC will provide music for some occasions on a free or pay per event basis. As soon as possible, a music director will be hired on a part time basis to provide Sunday Service music and develop an adult and children's choir.

I. AGREEMENT ON SEPARATION: To avoid confusion at the time of separation of the New Church from MLUC, the following agreements are made:

1. Staff: All staff will be hired as employees of the new church, even though they will legally be employees of MLUC. At time of separation they will become legally and administratively employees of the new church.
2. Budget: MLUC will set up separate accounts for the new church. It will receive and disburse funds from these accounts. At separation these accounts and monies in them will be transferred to the New Church.
3. Endowment money: Any contributions of endowment money to MLUC will be retained by MLUC unless there are specific instructions to hold it for the New Church.
4. Membership: New members of the New Church or those transferring to the New Church will be held in a separate category from old and new members of MLUC. For the first year or so, members of the New Church may be legally members of MLUC, but their pledges, church records, directory addresses, etc. will be kept in a separate category, which will be turned over to the New Church on Separation.
5. Debt: Any debt incurred in operations of the New Church will be assigned to the New Church on separation.
6. Joint Committees and Task Forces: Joint Committees and Task Forces may be formed by the two churches. These committees and Task Forces can decide on their own whether they wish to continue to operate jointly or become separate.
7. Legal issues. The New Church will incorporate as a new legal entity with its own bylaws.

Please see a revised budget in separate document.