

TO: UUA Board of Trustees

FROM: Eva Marx, BOT Liaison to District Presidents Association

DATE: December 17, 2006

The District Presidents Association (DPA) meets twice a year—a one-day meeting in conjunction with General Assembly (GA) and a longer meeting in the fall where there is more time for reflection, discussion, and action. This report covers highlights of the DPA fall meeting held November 2-4, 2006 in Boston. Nineteen districts were represented.

The evening of November 2 the district presidents met informally with UUA President Bill Sinkford. UUA Moderator Gini Courter addressed the district presidents on November 3. She announced the formation of a National Leadership Task Force to be chaired by Sue Stukey. The task force will explore how to more effectively identify, recruit, and acknowledge volunteers. Gini described plans for reducing the demands upon candidates for national office leading up to the 2009 UUA elections. These include DVDs for congregational viewing and a national videoconference. The videoconference would require District spring conferences/annual meetings to be scheduled at the same time in April 2009. Gini also asked that Districts schedule district meetings so as not to conflict with Board of Trustees meetings. She pointed out that LREDA has moved its annual meeting date so that the meeting will no longer conflict with the Board's October meeting.

Gini announced that the AR/AO/MC training will be offered after GA for new leaders and leaders who have not yet participated in these trainings. She described the Open Space process planned for the 2007 General Assembly and provided an overview of the various events and processes that will affect institutional change between now and 2011. Then Gini, Harlan Limpert, Director of District Services, and Elyse Resnick and Joe Sullivan, who represent the DPA on the Congregations Come First (CCF) Task Force, described CCF explorations of district structures and services. Extensive discussion of this presentation took place Friday and Saturday afternoons. Each district president will invite the district Annual Program Fund (APF) chair, the district executive, and the district trustee, all of whom will have heard similar presentations, to share their perspectives with one another at the district level.

Kay Montgomery gave a brief update of UUA highlights and then invited questions and observations from the group. Issues that emerged during discussion included:

- The progress of Pathways and Wellspring. Kay responded that Pathways had been an experiment from which much has been learned. Joe Sullivan observed that Pathways was one of the most exciting congregations he has encountered—vibrant with tremendous energy and great leadership. Elyse Reznick related that Wellspring has an energetic minister. The congregation is forming small groups and UUA consultants are working with neighboring congregations so that they too are benefiting from this effort.

- Plans for preparing congregations in the Portland area to respond to the impact of the 2007 GA.
- The need to support part-time ministry that would include more than filling a pulpit on Sunday.
- Inconsistency in systems for electing district trustees.
- The need for crisis management specialists so that district executives can focus on transformation and growing Unitarian Universalism, not crisis response. District presidents need to support DEs when congregations complain that DEs are not responsive as they would like because the district has other priorities.
- Need to help small churches feel valued.

Stephan Papa, Special Assistant to the President for Congregational Giving and Growth Funding, described plans for the Now Is the Time comprehensive campaign and requested district presidents' assistance with informing congregations about Association Sunday, scheduled for Sunday, October 14, 2007.

Laurel Amabile, Director of the Annual Program Fund, offered to visit districts to promote APF and discussed the importance of identifying district APF chairs with the appropriate skill sets.

Harlan Limpert, Director of District Services, reported progress since his last report to the DPA.

- Increased salaries have made it possible to attract excellent staff; 16 out of 36 are new.
- Three of the four 2007 Breakthrough Congregation are First Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon; All Souls UU Church, Kansas City, Missouri; and Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship, Carbondale, Illinois.
- Plans for the 2007 UU University are moving forward; Gil Rendle will be the keynote speaker.
- A packet of three CDs with a cover letter from Bill Sinkford is being sent to all congregations. The CDs are (1) Ideas for Growth (the 2006 UU University membership workshops) and Gail Geisenheimer's sermon at the 2006 GA Sunday morning service renamed "Reflections on the Experiences of a Newcomer," (2) the videos developed by the 2006 Breakthrough Congregations, and (3) "Drive Time Essays 2: The Best of Interconnections."

Harlan then led a discussion on equitable sharing of medical costs, a proposal to equalize the cost of health insurance for district employees across districts. If districts cover the costs of their individual staff members, the annual cost of health insurance would range from \$2,000 - \$18,000 per district and \$600 - \$12,000 per person. Distributing the costs more evenly would simplify administration of the plan, protect districts from cost swings as employees come and go, and result in focusing on employing the best people rather than attempting to contain costs by hiring the youngest and healthiest. Harlan suggested dividing the total cost of \$254,694 by 36 employees. The district presidents recommended pro-rating the cost based on salary of each employee as opposed to

dividing the cost equally among the 36 personnel. Harlan requested that the DPs speak with their boards for affirmation. The DPs requested a timeline for budgeting purposes.

The DPA agreed several years ago upon the importance of setting goals and measuring progress. The Measurements Task Force, consisting of Richard Speck, Joe Sullivan, Andrea Lerner, Janine Larsen (chair), Bob Hill, and Harlan Limpert, developed a listing of basic data that was approved at the BCM and by the DPA in 2005-2006. Joe Sullivan presented the reporting form that was developed on the basis of this agreement. Data include number and percent of congregations contributing district and UUA Fair Share; number and percent of congregations represented at and presidents attending GA and district annual meetings; number and percent of congregations with increases, decreases, or no change in membership; and number and percent of congregations that have full-time or part-time ministers or are lay-led. Harlan has asked staff to track data using this form and will communicate with staff and district presidents about whether or not they consider these data useful.

The DPA will meet again on June 20, 2007 in Portland, Oregon.