

DRAFT

Summary Strategic Plan for the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis 2011 - 2015



Introduction

On December 14, 2010 The Board of Trustees (BOT) of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis (UUFC) formally established a policy on long range and strategic planning. The policy states that the UUFC Strategic Plan will typically cover a 4-year period and will serve as an overall planning guide for Fellowship ministry, programs, facilities, staffing, fundraising, and growth. It is to be designed to guide the evolving vision and mission of the congregation and to provide a broad framework for more specific annual planning. It is UUFC policy that our strategic planning should include direct involvement of the congregation, committees, ministers, and staff, and should be coordinated by the BOT and its Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC.)

It is important to note that while the Strategic Plan provides guidance, it does not set priorities, nor does it describe specific action for a given time period. It is the UUFC *Annual Plan* that serves as a more detailed action plan for implementing the Fellowship goals identified in the Strategic Plan. The Annual Plan defines high priority objectives and actions that the BOT, ministers, staff, and committee chairs propose to carry out for a given year. UUFC planning policy states that the Annual Plan shall be initiated by the Board and the Long Range Planning Committee at the annual leadership retreat each summer/fall.

The summary that follows reflects the work of the 2011 UUFC Long Range Planning Committee, which began with an initial meeting on March 1, 2011. The committee based its work on the recorded outcomes of an all-day congregational visioning workshop that took place on November 13, 2010. This document is a summary of extensive and far reaching discussions that involved many people and took place over a period of months. Therefore, of necessity, it lacks much of the range and richness that characterized those discussions. However, meeting notes and unabridged drafts of this material will still contribute much to the conversations that will take place when Annual Plans are developed in the future.

This Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document, which means that it reflects our current thinking about our present circumstances. As circumstances change, so must the plan. However, changes in our plans will not be made capriciously or arbitrarily, rather they will be made with the same thoughtful care and transparency that characterize the development of this plan.

This plan clearly demonstrates that there is no shortage of hopes and dreams for the UUFC. Our members are passionate about the need for us to actively address a number of societal and environmental issues, while they also place great value on activities such as music ministry and religious exploration (RE). There is nearly universal agreement among the congregation that all of these activities are appropriate and important, but there is less agreement about their relative importance. The very passion that makes our members community leaders in such areas as the environment, homelessness and hunger and that sustains our vibrant RE and music programs could fragment our congregation around the issue of allocating resources. We will not allow that to happen. We will respect and value all of our activities and programs, and we will work together to find the means to support them.

Vision

We draw from diverse life-affirming cultural, religious, and spiritual heritages, and we live our UU principles with passion, both in word and deed. We treat all people with respect, honesty, and compassion, and we welcome others into our cherished community. The local community and the world know and respect us for our work for peace, social and economic justice, and care of the earth.

Mission

We are a Fellowship united in a quest for significance in our common existence and for meaning and direction in our individual lives. We offer to children and adults a welcoming and supportive community where we nourish personal and shared growth, develop our own traditions and rituals, and renew our hearts, minds and spirits. In the free tradition of Unitarian Universalism, and drawing from its Principles, we seek to foster respect for all people, to manifest our reverence for the natural world, and to model out ideals through individual and collective contributions to the larger community.

I. Worship

Worship and Music

UUFC worship takes many forms and serves many purposes. For example, elements of worship might include a central presentation that holds up that which is important to us. It might include music, readings, meditation and introspection, sharing time with children, and opportunities for building community. Worship might be a solitary act or involve many others. Worship encourages us to think on a regular basis about our lives, our values, ethics, emotions, relationships, history, joys, and sorrows. It reminds of or our relationships with the earth and with cultures and philosophies that have preceded us. It can help us discover how to remain alive and hopeful despite our feelings of grief and loss, and it helps us give form and shape to the joys of our lives.

- **Goal:** We will experience stimulating and inspiring worship services with a wide diversity of topics, formats, and worship leaders. Many congregants will participate in various ways. Worship services will provide us with common experiences which serve to center our community.
- **Goal:** We will experience a diversified music program that involves a high percentage of the congregation and that is integrated with and reflects the mission and vision of the church. Music during services will be heartfelt and uplifting.
- **Goal:** Our music program will extend beyond the confines of our church. Our participation in music with other UU churches, the Pacific Northwest District (PNWD) and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) will help connect us to the wider UU world. Through music we will also participate in the life of the Corvallis community.
- **Goal:** Our music professionals and volunteers will be and will feel supported, recognized and rewarded.

Children, Youth and Families

Our youth Religious Exploration (RE) program for children and youth is large and thriving. Indeed, the UUFC has a large RE program for a mid-size congregation. We are of course proud of our large and successful RE program, but we recognize that its size and vitality require a relatively large investment of the congregation's time and resources. We also realize that our RE program places a heavy load on our RE professionals and volunteers. We are determined not only to sustain our RE program, but to enlarge and improve it to better serve our congregation and the larger community.

The UUFC's parenting adults and young families are an important and valued part of the congregation. We understand that they have special needs, and we seek to better understand those needs and to find new ways of meeting them.

- **Goal:** Parenting adults will be able to attend services, enjoy social times, and UUFC events, because religious exploration classes and quality child care is readily available to them.
- **Goal:** We will develop appropriate mechanisms and procedures for providing parenting adults with family support referrals and other resources to enhance their parenting skills.
- **Goal:** Children and youth of all ages, genders and temperaments will feel safe and love attending the RE program, because they will find their experiences affirming, meaningful and fun.
- **Goal:** We will recruit and integrate interested youth into adult programming and activities. Children and youth will be included regularly and often in services, multigenerational activities, and other programs.
- **Goal:** The RE Co-Directors and volunteers will be and will feel well supported, recognized and rewarded.

Adult Programs

Adult Programming is intended to challenge and nourish personal and shared growth, deepen and share the traditions and rituals that renew our hearts, minds and spirits, connect us with the knowledge, interests and practices of the diverse communities of the world and do so with acceptance, respect, joy and reverence for the natural and human world in which we live.

To some members of the congregation, adult programming consists of Adult Religious Exploration and small group ministry. Others define it more broadly to include any program or event at UUFC that is primarily aimed at adults, rather than children or youth. Whatever its scope, we will expand adult programming at UUFC, and we will ensure that it supports and inspires our members.

- **Goal:** We will clarify what the term "Adult Program" means at UUFC; and we will develop a policy and establish a committee for Adult Programs.
- **Goal:** We will coordinate all adult programs at UUFC to provide members and the wider community with diverse opportunities for faith-based cooperation, worship experiences, workshops, action projects, performances, and affinity groups.
- **Goal:** We will Provide and promote regularly scheduled adult religious exploration courses and discussion groups to explore the wealth, diversity and history of UU and other world religions.
- **Goal:** We will coordinate Adult Programs with Worship and Children's and Youth's Religious Exploration to support and expand the impact of the excellent programming available.

II. A Welcoming and Caring Fellowship

Welcoming Others Into Our UU Community

One of our fundamental principles is that we are a welcoming community that honors cultural, political and religious differences. However, we know that we can always do better, especially in reaching out to and welcoming those in the greater Corvallis area who may know little or nothing about us. We recognize that a larger, more diverse membership would be good for UUFC in many ways. Therefore, we seek to enhance our current approaches and develop new ones for reaching out to the larger community.

- **Goal:** We will be more visible in the community. We will use our space as a performance and lecture venue to reach out to the larger community. We will use publicity to make information about our programs widely available, and we will actively welcome visitors at these events.
- **Goal:** We will be good neighbors, and we will reach out to our immediate neighbors to invite them to participate in UUFC events and activities.
- **Goal:** All members of our congregation will have the skills to be welcoming to newcomers and outsiders.
- **Goal:** We will maintain the appearance of our building and grounds to create a venue that is welcoming and functional.

Caring for One Another

We feel that we do a good job of caring for those who we know are in crisis. Covenant groups, the choir and other small group are particularly good at sensing and addressing the needs of their members. On the other hand, we are concerned that the needs of members of the congregation in general might too easily go unrecognized and unaddressed. Thus, we believe that we need to create better ways of knowing about people's financial, health, emotional, or other needs and of appropriately responding to those needs.

- **Goal:** We will foster a culture in which we are comfortable both seeking and providing help.
- **Goal:** With sensitivity to privacy issues, we will create communications systems and procedures for sharing information about needs, and resources services within our UUFC community.
- **Goal:** We will invite others to join our community of volunteers, and we will encourage more members to actively participate in caring services.
- **Goal:** We will care for our volunteers by: providing advice and training, ensuring that they understand what is expected of them when they volunteer and being sensitive to the likelihood of "volunteer burnout".

III. Peace, Social Justice and Environmental Sustainability

We promote and affirm peace and social justice in our congregation life, and we are committed to working for peace and social justice everywhere. As a community, UUFC values individual and collective activities that ground us in our spiritual connections to the earth, educate us about our Earth, reduce our environmental impacts, and promote sustainability. By our actions we have become an example to the wider community of a church institution that is focused on sustainability and environmental action. In August 2010, we were certified by the UUA as a Green Sanctuary, and in October we celebrated installation of our new solar electric panels. In facilities use and maintenance and in any new construction we are determined to use sustainable materials and practices, and to develop the means for production of food on our grounds.

- **Goal:** The members of the UUFC congregation will be well informed of our peace and justice work, and they will find it easy to become personally involved.
- **Goal:** Educational events will be provided for ourselves and the community around peace and social justice issues. These events will provide a safe place for community discussion and education around difficult issues related to peace and social justice.
- **Goal:** We will join with other organization and faith groups within our community to promote peace and justice. We will provide leadership and a framework for local action.
- **Goal:** We will continue to offer public programs on environmental topics which will be widely publicized. We will make connections with other faith groups to create ecumenical environmental actions.
- **Goal:** We will use water, earth, air and fire as themes of worship through the year. We will continue the Wheel of the Year activities and promote them to the wider community. We will express our spiritual connection to the earth through worship.

IV. Stewardship of UUFC

Stewardship is a common thread that runs throughout this plan. The word implies that we, the members of the UUFC, understand that do not own the Fellowship, but we readily acknowledge that are responsible for its current vitality and for its future well being. Our sense of stewardship means that our responsibility is not some vaguely felt group obligation, rather it is a personal responsibility that applies to each of us individually. In a practical sense stewardship tells us that good things do not just happen at UUFC. Someone has to make them happen, and that someone is us.

Buildings and Facilities

We value beauty, safety, access and utility in our buildings and facilities. In all our building and grounds decisions we make sustainability best practices a high priority.

- **Goal:** We will develop a congregational culture that is committed to the stewardship of our building and grounds.
- **Goal:** We will continuously work to improve the building and facilities.
- **Goal:** Our facilities will grow to fit our needs and resources. We will revisit the Master Plan for expansion of our building and commit to developing a time line and action plan for moving forward with that plan.

Financial Stewardship

Despite our troubled economic times, our pledging has at least held steady rather than declining, and for that we are grateful. But fund raising is only part of the story. UUFC leaders have been sensitive to the fact that we all have limited resources, and they have carefully conserved and allocated funds in ways that are consistent with our core values.

We envision a year around culture of stewardship of the UUFC, such that all members and friends feel and act on a personal responsibility to provide financial support and volunteer time to the extent possible for them. We further envision that the new perspectives on giving of time, monies and talents will lead to new kinds of service, new ways of being in community and the capacity to do things we have not yet even dreamed of.

- **Goal:** We will make stewardship the core of a fundraising effort that is a year around process and not just a seasonal event. We will create a new culture of giving in which we are not embarrassed about asking members for their support, and we will take steps to make it easy for people to give.
- **Goal:** We will all have a better understanding of what annual amount is appropriate for members and friends.
- **Goal:** We will have 100% participation in the pledge process resulting in a budget that allows us to replenish our rainy day reserves.
- **Goal:** We will place major emphasis on planned giving to support long range plans and goals, and we will conduct a capital campaign involving this and other funding sources that are separate from annual giving

Right Relations Covenant

Summary: As a member of this Fellowship, I will strive to create a welcoming, respectful, and vibrant religious community where each person can search for truth and meaning in an environment that builds connections, renews spirit, and inspires action. I further commit to thoughtful, active participation in the life of this religious community; caring and respectful relationships with one another and with visitors; cooperative support for the minister, staff, and volunteers; individual and collective contributions to the wider community, and environmental actions that demonstrate that I cherish our glorious Earth.

This covenant represents my commitment to thoughtful, active participation in the life of this religious community; caring and respectful relationships with one another and with visitors; cooperative support for the minister, staff, and volunteers; individual and collective contributions to the wider community; and respect and caring for the Earth.

Ministerial Transition

In March 2011 our Minister, Rev. Dr. Gretchen Woods, announced that after 12 years as UUFC minister, she would be leaving us and seeking new roles and new challenges as a UU minister. Therefore, during the next two years the UUFC will transition from the ministerial leadership of the Rev. Dr. Gretchen Woods to that of a new minister. Such changes are often difficult. For some, there is a feeling of abandonment or loss. Others may feel threatened by the unknown. Will they like the new minister? Will they change things important to them? For any religious community, this transition is among the most difficult. For our congregation, it is important to acknowledge the challenges of this transition and set goals and identify strategies for its successful accomplishment.

Upon notification, the Board of Trustees contacted the Pacific Northwest District of the UUA, requesting assistance in selection of an interim minister, typically an 18-month to two-year assignment. As a matter of UU policy, the process of selecting an interim minister is to be carried out by the Board of Trustees. That process is on-going; it will be completed by June 1.

The search process for our new Settled Minister generally will follow procedures outlined by the UUA. According to our bylaws, the Nominating Committee will solicit nominees for the Ministerial Search Committee. The Nominating Committee will recommend a slate to the Congregation, which will elect members at a Congregational Meeting.

- **Goal:** The Nominating Committee will recommend a Search Committee that represents the range of interests and needs of the congregation.
- **Goal:** We will conduct a ministerial search process that includes and involves a cross section of UUFC interests.
- **Goal:** The search process will develop a consensus on what we are looking for in a new minister, and the process will conclude with a virtually unanimous choice.
- **Goal:** We will welcome our new minister to UUFC and our community, and we will embrace the changes that his/her personality, style and philosophy will inevitably bring to our Fellowship