



Florida District Connections

January 6, 2010

Notes from our District Executive

Dear Companions,

A few weeks ago, our UUA field staff met in Boston with our new UUA President, **Peter Morales**. He shared with us his expectations for our work. Not surprisingly, he asked us to lift up the question of **numerical congregational growth** and to devote time and resources to where growing congregations is most likely.



There are several kinds of growth to consider in congregational life: *spiritual maturity, congregational stewardship, organizational health, effective social witness, and simple membership enrollment*. I'll address these in the next few issues of the *FLD Connections*.

I begin with numbers because, to quote our President, **each number represents a living person who is or wants to be part of our religious community**. We are in the people business. In this deep sense, the numbers do matter. They tell us how well we reaching people!

Broadly, the **numbers are worrisome**, across the board for traditional churches and Unitarian Universalists among them. We are in the midst of a huge cultural shift. Fewer than 50% of American people participate in any worship in a given week. The historic "mainline" churches are all in decline. Among ourselves, our Association has only a few more members today than it did upon formation 48 years ago, currently just over 172,000, down from the previous year. Our Florida District declined by over 100 members last year, to fewer than 4900 adults. Yes, numbers matter. But what do they tell us is the harder to fathom question ~ except that we should pay attention!

President Morales cited research that indicates Unitarian Universalist congregations host **5,000 or so guests EVERY week**. These are people who seek us out. In a year, that's over 250,000 people, more than our existing membership. [There's another empirical study from the Gallup organization that argues over 750,000 people claim to be members of our congregations; it sure would be nice if they were actually known to us!]

Often, during the recent Presidential campaign, Morales would say, **to grow our faith, we need simply to stop repelling our guests**. Here's the truth: we are attractive to a great many people, but we don't hold them. Could it be that when they experience us up close, we fail to feed their yearning? Is Peter Morales right: we actively repel people?

In my role as your DE, I have preached the need to do a better job with

welcoming, hospitality, and having intentional pathways to membership. Our numbers suggest the need to say it again!

I encourage you to do a few things to test your growth potential:

Ask: How well do you welcome guests? Ask them, not yourselves! Do you follow up return guests with any kind of personal contact? If not, why not? Were I to express interest in joining your congregation, would you be able to tell me of a process more demanding than "sign" the book?

Calculate: Add up the *number of guests* you had in the last 12 months. Divide that count by your *membership number*. If your **ratio is less than 1**, you need to do a better job of public relations, letting people know you exist. When the ratio is less than 1, you will be pressed just to hold even due to losses by moves or death.

If the **ratio is greater than 1**, you have improving odds for growth. The test then becomes how well you invite people into membership, converting them from "attendees" to active participants. A simple secondary test: ask your new members how many friends they have made after six months. If the report is fewer than 5, the odds are poor that they will remain as members two years later. That suggests, hospitality is ever an on-going matter of how we build a deeply engaging, life-transforming, soul-uplifting faith community.

These are the most practical tips I can give you to **measure your potential for growing** your congregation.

True, numbers are not all that matters. But they do matter! We'll chat about the other kinds of growth next time. Meanwhile, start counting ... on a good new year!

All blessings, Kenn

Notes from our Lifespan Program Consultant

Happy New Year!

Upcoming Events -Mark your calendars

This is the district calendar link:

http://www.floridadistrict.org/?page_id=87

Please pay close attention to the wonderful programs that are being offered by your Florida District UUA.



Faith Development For Any Size Congregation- Workshop

February 6, 2010

[Manatee Unitarian Universalist Fellowship](#), Bradenton Florida

Registration is limited so register early. The early bird registration is \$25.

The ending date for early registration is January 29.

After January 29th the cost is \$35. There will be no refunds after January 29th.

Childcare will be available. [Click here for event flyer](#) or [click here to register online](#).

Adult Advisor Training for Congregational Youth Groups

We all want strong congregational youth groups. This workshop will explore roles and responsibilities of adult advisors. We will talk about how to build and maintain strong support, who and what we serve and how to grow a great youth group. No one style fits all congregations, however, there are realities and issues that we all have in common. The workshop will begin at 10: 00 and end by 4:00. We will provide lunch and childcare. It will cost \$25.00 and registration will be open until March 15th.

Plan now to join us for next year's Southland Unitarian Universalist Leadership Experience

Now is the time to budget for Southland Unitarian Universalist Leadership Experience. This is an opportunity for current and future leaders to deepen their understanding of congregational leadership and to develop their abilities with other Unitarian Universalist leaders. This five-day program will be held **August 8-12** at The Mountain Retreat and Learning Centers. [Read more](#)

Connie Goodbread

Lifespan Program Consultant

Florida District UUA

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Nurture your spirit. Help heal our world.

Trustee Tidbits

After the usual hectic holidays it is time to breathe a sigh of "newness" and hope your congregation will experience and blessed and productive 2010. This will be the second column devoted to the thoughts and words of Rev. Peter Morales, UUA President as expressed at the October Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting. Rev. Morales believes Unitarian Universalism should be far more than "the tiny, fringe religion it is today". Last month I wrote about growth and what must be done to accomplish this imperative.



Rev. Morales is passionate about social action and public witness efforts. He knows we have always been a faith who believes that true spirituality is fruitful

In order to create many more opportunities to put our faith into action Rev. Morales' administration will build on our UUA's historic continuing opportunity for partnership with the UU Service Committee. This new partnership has already responded together to the Gulf Coast disasters, in Asia, and during the genocide in Darfur. Rev. Morales believes there is much more we can do together.

I wish your congregation good health and good relationships in 2010. Please know I am available for conversation, and/or speaking at a Sunday service. I am usually a phone call (813-931-9727) or email (jlund@uua.org) away. Happy New Year one and all.

Joan Lund

The Smart Church #35

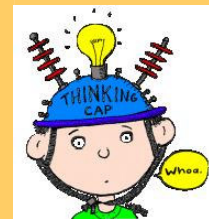
[Download a printable PDF of this column](#)

The Faith That Loves Beyond Belief

By Connie Goodbread

At Fall LREDA Conference this past November I heard Thandeka say that Unitarian Universalism is the faith that loves beyond belief. I have thought about it ever since. Do we practice Love Beyond Belief? Do our congregations? What would the world look like if more people practiced Love Beyond Belief? How would we go about setting up a spiritual discipline that would help individuals practice Love Beyond Belief? Is Unitarian Universalism founded in love? Is love the bedrock of our values? How is this different from other faiths? traditions? Is it different?

Our Universalist side teaches Universal Love. Our Unitarian side is founded in the Congregationalist movement in New England with the Cambridge Platform



I think these statements are true -I only have control over my own behavior. I can only affect a system of which I am a part. I do not have all the answers. Amazing things happen when people come together in mutual love, respect and devotion to work together to make a difference. The questions I ask myself are:

- How can I be the best that I can be?
- How can I support others, all others, to be the best that they can be?
- How can I be in loving relationship with people and creation?
- How can I help to be part of the change I would like to see in the world?
- Where do I get my support as I try to be the best and do the best that I can?
- Can I forgive myself when I fail?
- Can I forgive others when they fail?
- Can I begin again, in love?

Does Unitarian Universalism help me to find the answers to these questions?
Does our faith help you? Could it help others?

Best Practices Among Our District Congregations

This Month: **The Congregational Handbook** ~ [UU Church of Tallahassee](#)

It's In There

by the Reverend Robin Gray

The first time I saw it, I stifled a groan. 'It' was a three ring binder entitled Manual of Policies and Procedures. Reading the Manual I realized it encapsulated hundreds of decisions, some of them difficult decisions, that shape this congregation.

Ninety percent of the time, the guidelines in the Manual can readily be applied. Want to know how staff evaluation processes work, and if staff are to be involved in their own evaluations? It's in there. Want to know who is responsible for the safety of Playground equipment? It's in there. Wondering if there's a way for the congregation to make a 'one voice' statement on a topical issue? It's in there.

Ten percent of the time, referring to the Manual leads to amended decisions. After thorough review, the Board can adopt changes or additions. The next time someone wants to know how it's done around here -- it's in there.

Have you a best practice? Share it with others. Send a fewer than 250 words highlight to FloridaDistrictUUA@cfl.rr.com.

January District Packet



The **January 2010 monthly packet** has been posted to the District website and may be viewed at the following link:

<http://www.floridadistrict.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/UUA-FLD-January-2010->

[Packet.pdf](#)

Please share the information contained in the monthly packet with individuals in your congregation. This edition of the District packet contains the following items:

- District Calendar, page 1
- Reconciliation Conference - Int'l Assoc. for Religious Freedom flyer, page 2
- OWL Teacher Training flyer, page 3
- Third Tuesday Webinar series flyer, page 4
- Florida District President's Roundtable flyer, page 5
- New Directions for Congregational Stewardship webinar, page 6
- Faith Development Workshop flyer, page 7
- Choral Festival flyer, page 8
- Building the World We Dream About Workshop flyer, page 9 & 10
- UUA Certification of Membership information, page 11
- UUA Update Your Congregation's Membership flyer, page 12
- Florida District Award Nomination information, page 13 & 14
- UUA Bookstore flyer, page 15
- UUA Commission on Appraisal flyer, page 16
- Peace Conference flyer, page 17
- Chalice Lighter Call for Friendship Fellowship at Pineda and UU Congregation of Tampa

Looking for a single event flyer? District event flyers are linked to the calendar page on the District website (see http://www.floridadistrict.org/?page_id=87). Simply click the event listed on the calendar and the flyer will open. UUA, Congregation, Cluster, and Affiliated Organization event listings are linked to those entities websites whenever possible.

The complete packet is also linked to the website calendar (go to the calendar link at www.floridadistrict.org and click the "entire monthly packet" notation above the calendar). Please note this is a multi-page download and may take a few minutes to open if you are working with a dial-up connection and/or older computer.

Around the Florida District - News and Events to Note

Upcoming Florida District Events - Save these Dates

[Third Tuesday Webinar Series](#) - January 19 on Right Relations, February 16, March 16

[President's Roundtable](#) - January 23 - [First Unitarian Church of Orlando](#)
~ [Register online](#)

[New Directions for Congregational Stewardship](#) - Webinar with Dr. Wayne Clark, UUA Director for Congregational Stewardship Services - January 27 ~ [Register online](#)

[Faith Development Workshop](#) - February 6 - [Manatee UU Fellowship](#) ~ [Register online](#)

District Board Meeting - February 19-20- Canterbury Retreat Center, Oviedo

Faith Development Webinar - March 4 - *Building a Strong RE Committee*

[Building the World We Dream About Workshop](#) - March 13 - [UU Fellowship of Boca Raton](#)

Cluster, Congregation & Affiliated Organization Events

[Reconciliation with the Earth, Each Other and the Stranger](#) - Int'l Association for Religious Freedom U.S. Chapter Conference - January 14-17 - [UUs of Clearwater](#)

[OWL Teacher Training](#) - January 14-16 - [UU Church of Ft. Myers](#)

[4th Annual Florida District Choral Festival](#) - February 27-28 - [UU Fellowship of Vero Beach](#)

A Holistic Vision for the Future Seminar - February 27 - [Manatee UU Fellowship](#)

Southwest Cluster Spring Meeting - March 6 - [UU Church of Sarasota](#)

Nominations For Florida District Awards Are Now being Accepted

The Florida District Awards Committee requests your nominations to honor members who have made significant contributions to their congregations and communities. Nominations must be submitted electronically via email attachment and received no later than March 15. Awards will be presented at our District Assembly in April 2010.

[District Award Information Flyer and Nomination Form](#) - Adobe PDF format
[District Award Information Flyer and Nomination Form](#) - Microsoft Word format

UUA CD's and DVD's Available for Congregations

Free While Supplies Last - We have an assortment of UUA workshop and training CD's and DVD's available for congregations. Supplies are limited and requests will be honored in the order they are received. The titles currently available are:

- * Drive Time Essays 1
- * Drive Time Essays 2
- * Drive Time Essays 3
- * UU University 2006
- * UU University 2007
- * UU University 2008
- * Ideas for Worship
- * Breakthrough Congregations 2008
- * Ministry Matters: Strengthening Lay and Professional Leadership
(very limited supply of this one)

To receive any of the above for your congregation, please email the District office (FloridaDistrictUUA@cfl.rr.com) and provide your name, congregation, and a list of the CD/DVD titles you are requesting.

Request for Proposals - Florida District Assembly

The annual District Assembly is in Miami April 9-11, 2010. UUA Moderator Gini

Courter is our guest presenter on the theme of "What next for Unitarian Universalism." You are invited to submit a no more than 50 word summary of a presentation you might like to offer at the DA's workshops. Topics broadly relevant to Unitarian Universalists, of course, are welcome. Most welcome are those that give congregational leaders practical tools for strengthening our ministries. Apply by January 6, 2010, directly to the District Executive: khurto@uua.org.

For Congregation Presidents, Ministers and Administrators

The UUA online Congregational Certification of Membership system is now open and ready to certify your congregation's membership for fiscal year 2010-2011. The deadline is February 1, 2010. Complete details will be included in the December and January District Monthly Packets. For more information visit <http://www.uua.org/leaders/dataservices/faq/>.

Congregations are also invited to participate in the Congregational Poll to decide: 1) whether to admit a revised Draft Statement of Conscience on Peacemaking to the Final GA Agenda for 2010, and 2) which Proposed Congregational Study/Action Issues for 2010-2014 will be admitted to the Final GA Agenda for 2010.

Florida District Directory

The updated Florida District Directory 2009-2010 is now available. This year, in an effort to conserve resources, our directory will be offered only electronically via web access. Please contact the district office (FloridaDistrictUUA@cfl.rr.com or 407-894-2119) for the web link and password.

Things to Know in Our Extended Unitarian Universalist World

Unitarian Universalist Minister Nominated for Grammy Award

Rev. Dan Schatz, the minister of the [BuxMont Unitarian Universalist \(UU\) Fellowship](#) in Warrington, PA, has been nominated for a Grammy award for 2009. [Read more](#)



The UUA January Monthly Bulletin for Congregations

is now available and may be viewed at this link:

<http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/congregationalmonthly/153992.shtml>

What Should the Commission on Appraisal Study Next?

review and report its conclusions to a regular General Assembly."
To see what the COA has studied in previous years, check out our website for details and reports: www.uua.org/coa.

UUA Directory now Online

The Unitarian Universalist Association Directory is published annually as a comprehensive listing of addresses, contact information, and other Association data for our member congregations. The information is gathered using data from our files and from questionnaires mailed annually to each Unitarian Universalist congregation.



The 2010 Directory will be available online only, part of our transition to providing more services and resources electronically. It is available for you to view, print, and download free of charge at <http://www.uua.org/publications/directory/>. The pdf version is searchable for your convenience.

Quick Links

Calendars:

[Florida District UUA](#)
[UUA](#)

Websites:

[Florida District UUA](#)
[Unitarian Universalist Association](#)
[Church of the Larger Fellowship](#)
[Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](#)
[Beacon Youth Community](#)
[Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Florida](#)

Contact Us:

[District Executive](#)
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