

**REPORT TO THE UUA BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FROM THE
DISTRICT SERVICES STAFF GROUP
April, 2009**

REPORT FROM THE MADs REGION (Mid-America District Staff consisting of Heartland, Prairie Star, and Central Midwest Districts)

- ***Online events.*** This year MADs did a trial series of jointly sponsored Persony events. Evaluations of these have been over the top positive. We have developed the capacity to record and place on line all these events and have our system for this working well. For next year we have committed to a series of nine events, each repeated twice. We will also hold our first daylong online leadership seminar on a Saturday in late September. As exciting as these events are in themselves, we are finding that through this work we are creating the best online collection of podcasts for UU leadership development. The power in this is increased as we link to similar work being done in other districts like Thomas Jefferson and Florida Districts. All of it is made possible by sharing of expertise from many places, notably from Mark Steinwinter.
- ***www.MidWestUULeadership.org***. As we move to do more cooperatively than just Midwest Leadership School, we have realized that regionally focused cooperative leadership development work in our region is becoming, in marketing terms, a brand. We plan to promote this by moving materials produced by this work to a new website, www.MidWestUULeadership.org. We will move Stonetree there. Stonetree is software for connecting congregations to supply preachers and musicians that was first developed by volunteers in the Prairie Star District and which we have now adapted to use throughout our region. As our cooperative endeavors grow we will make this the place that collects them.
- ***Inaugural Midwest Youth Leadership School.*** In the past two years the staff of our three districts have worked hard—and successfully—to recruit a critical mass of younger leaders to our long-standing adult leadership school. We now want to extend this by inaugurating a concurrent youth leadership school. We will hold the first session of this new school at Beloit College in July concurrently with our adult leadership school. A key

innovative element of this new venture will be to have the adult and youth schools side-by-side. This will model intergenerationality in our leadership school work and will allow creative interchange between the programs. This also allows for much more effective use of staff time, the largest resource cost by far in such ventures especially since we have now managed to make these schools otherwise self-sustaining or nearly so. The youth and young adult staff of the districts have been crucial to this work, especially Kimberlee Tomczak and Sherry Warren. Also crucial to the success of the new youth leadership school has been the present Goldmine youth leadership school in the Pacific Northwest District.

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST DISTRICT:

- PSWD and UU Legislative Ministry, CA is hosting the 2nd annual Young Adult Water Justice Road Trip; using California as the text, UUs ages 18-30 explore the human right to water, learning how water flows toward money, hearing first hand stories from those who are harmed by water politics, and all along the way linking what they are learning with their religious beliefs - how does what they learn impact them as people of faith? Where is God in all this?
- PSWD now has a lifespan Camping Ministry Program - 8 camps comprise the program: two elementary camps, one Jr. High Camp, one Coming of Age Retreat, two Sr. High Camps, a young adult camp, and a multi-generational Family Camp. In addition, a Counselor-in-Training and Advisor Training program are run concurrently with the summer camps. The goal is to link camps in with the amazing faith development programs in local congregations, each building upon the other, and holding up the importance of connecting across congregational lines.
- Camp isn't just a week or weekend, it's forever.

MASS BAY DISTRICT:

In the Mass Bay District we continue to strengthen our "Learning Congregation" workshops with focus on lay worship, governance, pastoral care teams and

emergency preparedness. Our Annual Meeting and Spring Conference will be held on April 25 on "Seeking Wholeness in a Fragmented World". We have convened a conversation about stewardship in troubled times, and plan to follow that up with something more focused on pastoral care and support. In collaboration with the office of Continuing Education in MPL, we will be convening a Minister's workshop on Adaptive Leadership in August. We are overhauling our Chalice Lighters program to help move it into a new technological age and plan to use these funds to support growth efforts in congregations.

OHIO-MEADVILLE DISTRICT:

- **Youth Ministry Cluster Experience: For Youth and All Who Care About Youth.** In light of the new vision growing for ministry to and with youth, the Ohio Meadville District staff is facilitating a series of daylong conversations with the youth ministry stakeholders in each of the district's clusters of congregations. Two have already been held this year and more are scheduled.
- **The Youth Ministry Cluster Experience** is for Youth, Ministers, Religious Education Leaders, Youth Group Advisors, Parents and Congregational Presidents. The conversations include discussions on what resources are needed, how can clusters of congregations join together to mutually strengthen their youth programs and what the OMD can do to support those efforts.
- **District Assembly Attendance Growing.** Historically, the Ohio-Meadville District Assembly has not been well attended. Averages have been around 100 for the past ten years or more. Last year, however, numbers started to rise and we reached 165 in attendance. This year, early-bird registration is over 180 and we expect at least 200 to the March 27-28 Assembly. After this year, we will no longer be able to hold the event in our large congregations. We have outgrown all of the OMD larger churches.

PACIFIC CENTRAL DISTRICT:

- We also had a highly successful workshop on "Marketing to Share Your Message and Grow Your Ministry," presented by Valerie Holton and our UUA Trustee, Linda Laskowski. This was aimed, specifically, at those congregations outside of the Greater SF Bay Area who had not been covered by the major 2007 marketing campaign. It was our hope that such a workshop would encourage this second large region to form an inter-congregational group that would continue to work together, and we're very happy to report that such a group is now in the forming stage!
- The Pacific Central District is still talking about the wonderfully useful workshop, "Beyond Fundraising," presented by Wayne Clark. Maybe it was due in part to the economic anxieties, or maybe to the strong promotion that brought in over 60 people from 20 congregations, and it was surely due to Wayne's skill and experience, so that he received a standing ovation at the end that sounded like something at the end of the Ware Lecture!

MOUNTAIN DESERT DISTRICT

We are engaged in an Appreciative Inquiry process to re-imagine District Youth Ministry. The core team developed this affirmative topic statement to guide the Discovery, Dream and Design aspects of the process:

Youth in MDD are invited to a living Quest to encourage spiritual adventure, holy curiosity, and meaning making.

This Quest will empower youth to articulate beliefs; develop spiritual discipline; engage in social justice rooted firmly in faith, love and trust; and foster personal and religious resilience.

The intention of this journey is to equip youth to cultivate and live a UU identity.

We are in the Design phase which involves youth from across the district in five online design teams: Worship, Social Justice, Multi-generational congregations, Resilience and How we gather. We expect to make an initial design report in April.

FLORIDA DISTRICT

The District's Annual Assembly took place March 20-22 at the Sarasota Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Dr. Charlie Clements keynoted the assembly's theme, "The Arc of a Moral Universe ... Bends Toward Justice. Ten workshops focused on some aspect of economic justice, along with a like number of practical "how to do church life better" workshops.

The Florida District has raised its commitment to racial justice by revising its ENDS to include:

Florida District congregations, working together to become more welcoming, transform themselves and their communities to achieve racial, economic, and environmental justice.

The District's 3rd Thursday webinar continues to draw interest, with over 60 people participating in January's offering on Stewardship Best Practices. Congregational anxiety regarding finances is high throughout the District. A few congregations are struggling to make ends meet this year. At the same time, several report exceeding their campaign goals. The SW District Cluster also hosted Dr. Wayne Clark on stewardship.

The Friendship Fellowship at Pineda [Rockledge, Florida] dedicated its new building February 1st -- the third new building for our congregations in the last year. All three, interestingly, were self-financed through Limited Liability Corporations.

BALLOU CHANNING DISTRICT

- The District office is organizing a series of "Looking Forward..." Conversations for congregation lay and ordained leaders to look at opportunities and challenges in the next several years. Two of the Conversations will be focused on gathering input on what should be the district's role and approach to providing ministry to youth and ministry to young adults founded upon the newly emerging philosophy of the Association.

The third is to "look forward" to the future of congregations in the District with an emphasis on finding appropriate ways to enhance cooperation and consolidation to meet potential reduced resources and the cultural and community realities of the region.

- The District recently completed a process to place twelve acres of district owned property in a conservation restriction land trust. The conservation restriction protects the land from future development keeping it its current natural state and proscribes its use for only religious, educational, scientific and passive recreational purposes. Additionally, the District board has been involved in a two and a half year project, that has absorbed a significant amount of board and staff time, to address the ownership and operations of a small district owned retreat center that operates on the land recently placed in a conservation restriction. After extensive advisory discussion with stakeholders and congregation leaders the Board determined it would be best to create a new entity to own and operate the retreat center, relieving the district board and staff from management obligations that were not in keeping with the district's primary mission.
- A legislative ministry is being organized in the state of Rhode Island as a successor to an informal advocacy and information organization. The legislative ministry will focus on providing information to congregations and individuals about possible state legislative actions
- A Racial Justice and Equity Conclave will be held in late April to bring together individuals currently working on AR/AO issues. The intent is to organize a district Racial Justice and Equity support and education organization composed of individuals who have also made an affirmative commitment to actively work on AR/AO in and with their congregations.
- The District is proud to have had one of its congregations recognized as a 2009 Breakthrough Congregation -- the UU Congregation of South County. This year the congregation after 15 years of nomadic existence raised almost \$1 million to purchase and renovate a building as its permanent religious home.

Clara Barton District

- **Youth Assessment Process near completion.** The Clara Barton District's Youth Ministry Roundtable is close to completing its work of assessing and evaluating the youth ministry needs within Clara Barton District congregations. Their charge included three objectives, to assess and evaluate the CBD youth ministry in congregations, to incorporate recommendations from the CBD Youth Ministry Consultation and the UUA Youth Ministry Consultation Summit, and to make a recommendation for how the district can best support youth ministry in individual congregations and in the district as a whole.

The Roundtable held a day long youth rally on January 31st. It was very well attended. Participants shared their thoughts and ideas about youth ministry in their congregations. The results of this process indicated several universal high priorities-leadership development for both youth and adult leaders, and ways for youth to connect and work with other youth, as well as staff/volunteer adults to connect around common youth ministry goals. The YM Roundtable is also using personal outreach and electronic surveying to complete their assessment work. Their recommendation will be made by the end of the fiscal year.

- **District board is moving to Policy Governance.** After a weekend training with consultant Mary Higgins, the District Board voted unanimously at its January 2009 meeting to implement Policy Governance for the Clara Barton District Board beginning in July 2009. Over the course of this spring, the Board will be meeting with its constituents in a series of location-specific gatherings to introduce the change to PG and to begin a dialogue with the congregational leadership on the assets and challenges each congregation faces as it works to thrive in its mission and ministries.