

UUSIC STRATEGIC PLAN

JANUARY 2013

INTRODUCTION

In planning for the future, we begin by acknowledging our strengths as a congregation—those things that distinguish the UUSIC and of which we are most proud. In May 2012 Kay Crider, a UUA Congregational Consultant, was hired to conduct an assessment visit at the UUSIC. In her report, she commended us for our successes, highlighting these eight particular strengths of our congregation:

1. **Our newly settled and loved professional ministry:** Our recent search for a settled minister was successful and we called Reverend Steven Protzman in 2011. He was installed February 12, 2012. We are beginning a new chapter for our society with strong professional leadership to complement our talented lay leadership.
2. **Our high-functioning and successful stewardship team:** Our most recent annual budget drives have shown the skill, dedication, and organization of our stewardship team. The structure they have put in place will serve us well as we move forward to fund our programs and any building project. Many congregations do not have this asset in place.
3. **Our thriving Lifespan Religious Education:** Religious education enrollment for children and youth is at 135 – a fabulous number given our size congregation, showing that we have age diversity and a strong multigenerational presence. In addition, our adult programming is active and flourishing with our Welcome Home Wednesdays program.

Note: Although the Strategic Plan does not address Religious Education for children and youth as a separate goal, it does strongly affirm RE and urges the Society to maintain and expand these programs as we grow. All of the feedback the committee received affirmed the value of these programs for the Society.

4. **Our substantial endowment:** Many congregations our size do not have a sufficient endowment. Our endowment trustees have worked hard over the years to build and grow our endowment, which is valued at more than \$650,000.
5. **Our attitude of fun and enjoyment in committee work:** During Kay's meetings on site, three committees mentioned the fun and enjoyment of their service to the church. These attitudes are another great asset for our congregation to move forward in a positive way.
6. **Our Love Buses, which are a beacon for marriage equality in the Midwest:** Several congregants mentioned the importance and joy of our Love Buses that transport same-sex couples to Iowa City to get married. Kay extended kudos to us for this wonderful, inclusive program that raises awareness and makes us a champion for marriage equality in the Midwest.

7. **Our many social justice and multi-generational activities:** Two of our many delights that Kay heard repeatedly while on site were our numerous social justice activities (for example, Free Lunch, Empowerment, Crisis Center, Domestic Violence Intervention Program, Shelter House) and our multigenerational activities such as service trips and Welcome Home Wednesdays. We are successful in both of these areas.
8. **Our culture of generosity and abundance:** Some congregations hoping to undertake a building campaign are struggling with decreasing levels of annual giving and a culture of scarcity. In contrast, our congregation has been on an upward path of annual giving in recent years, in part due to the enthusiasm for our new minister, our thriving RE programs, as well as the recent addition of a part-time membership coordinator. Kay heard and read very little (in the surveys) about a scarcity mentality – just the opposite – that we are excited about our recent financial success and we are eager to move ahead in this new chapter in the life of our society.

All these strengths have been echoed throughout the mission/vision work, the canvassing responses, and the information gathered specifically for the Strategic Plan from committees, open forums, and the listening posts. We assume that these attributes and activities will remain as core elements of our identity and mission. We also recognize that we must be fiscally responsible and that resources must be allocated to support new initiatives. The Board will continue to be responsible for making fiscal decisions that will help the congregation reach its goals.

Kay recommended these steps to prepare us for our building decision:

1. Revisit our vision and mission statements.
2. Establish a Strategic Planning Team charged with producing a strategic plan by winter 2013.
3. Try a one-on-one annual stewardship drive.
4. Investigate building options within a basic, realistic financial range.

We have been following Kay's recommendations and accomplished the first three steps during Fall 2012. The Facilities Planning Task Force will be reactivated in 2013 to work on step 4, based on our goals as articulated in the vision and mission statements and outlined in the new Strategic Plan. Armed with this information, we will be positioned to make a decision about what facilities are needed to meet the needs of our diverse ministries and our dreams for the future.

UUSIC MISSION AND VISION

During the fall of 2012, we created and adopted a new Mission statement to define our fundamental purpose as a congregation: ***We are a diverse spiritual community that touches hearts, changes lives, and transforms the world.*** In addition we articulated a revised Vision statement, expressing the long term view of our aspirations for the future:

Our vision is to be a loving, inclusive, and growing spiritual community. We celebrate life and a liberal tradition that leads social justice work, heals the earth, and nurtures the lifelong journey of mind and spirit. This Strategic Plan will outline specific objectives and strategies for accomplishing our Mission and Vision.

STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE

In October, 2012, candidates for the Strategic Planning Task Force were solicited from the congregation and nominated by Board members. The Task Force members approved by the Board were Tim Adamson, Kimberley Kim, Mary McMurray, Kirk Witzberger, and Sue Otto (chair). Reverend Steven Protzman served as an ex-officio member. Diane Martin, Mary Jepsen and Marilyn Jennewein served as a special subcommittee to compile information for the Task Force from the mission/vision weekend and the canvass interview responses. The Task Force worked intensively during November and December to engage the congregation in thinking about the future of the UUSIC and to gather information about congregational priorities. This work is described in detail in the next section.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Our process included asking members of the congregation about the UUSIC's strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and the results we hope to see from our strategic plan. We set the context for this request by restating our Mission and Vision Statements:

Mission Statement:

We are a diverse spiritual community that touches hearts, changes lives, and transforms the world.

Vision Statement:

Our vision is to be a loving, inclusive, and growing spiritual community. We celebrate life and a liberal tradition that leads social justice work, heals the earth, and nurtures the lifelong journey of mind and spirit.

From the Vision Statement we identified three areas of focus—Healing the Earth, Nurturing the Mind and Spirit, and Leading Social Justice—and a fourth area, Growth (personal growth and growth in numbers), emerged as we analyzed member responses. In order to gather the Society's views, we provided opportunities for input in various ways, including:

1. We hosted three "open forums," one on Thursday, November 1 at 7:00 pm, the second on Sunday, November 11 at 8:45 am, and the third on Sunday, November 18 at 12:30 pm. During these forums attendees interviewed each other, using the Interview Guide included in the Appendix. After the one-on-one interviews, the group shared ideas recorded on a flip chart for all to see.
2. We were available for fireside chats/listening posts between services on most Sundays in November.

3. We placed posters in Channing Hall in November and December, with Post-Its, pens and pencils, and we asked the congregation to contribute their ideas. We announced this opportunity during one service and during the Fellowship Hour.
4. On one Sunday in November ushers handed each person entering each of the Sunday services a Post-It, then requested during the service that they write their ideas and place them on the posters in Channing Hall.
5. We created an online blog, and asked members to contribute their ideas online.
6. We announced each of the above in the weekly email update on multiple occasions.
7. The stewardship campaign included asking each member of the congregation what they liked most about our congregation and their aspirations for our future. These aspirations were analyzed when we compiled our top 30 list.
8. Our mission/vision workshop on September 8 included responses from 52 members about their dreams for our congregation, and these dreams were included in our compilation of our top 30 list.
9. Reverend Steven's sermons were purposefully connected to our mission, our vision, and the gift of time, talent, and energy that each of can contribute toward achieving our vision.
10. We asked the Religious Education teachers and students for their input.
11. After all of the above, we compiled the results and distilled the ideas to a top 30 list. We shared this list via the December 5 weekly email update, and in a printed list/ballot distributed during service on Sunday, December 9. Each of the 30 items were listed in the appropriate category (Healing the Earth, Nurturing the Mind and Spirit, Leading Social Justice, and Growth), and we asked each person to place 7 votes next to the items for which they had the most interest and energy. Time was given near the end of the service to vote. The vote was not an official vote of approval, but a final and easy opportunity for input.

The result of the input garnered from the above activities is presented in this plan.

THE UNDERLYING THEMES

In the course of our many discussions with the congregation and amongst ourselves, we have identified four implicit messages or themes that should be included in this report. As the Society considers the explicit goals outlined in this Plan, it should also consider these three points:

1. The Congregation clearly wants us to publicize our efforts more effectively to the broader community. There is a strong perception that if more people know who we are and what we are doing, many more will be attracted to the Society in some form. We concur and have included publicity in the Strategic Plan (cf. Objective 10). In addition, however, we believe that there is a similar "publicity deficit" in the congregation itself. There are so

many wonderful groups, activities, and projects under way now, but often our members and friends do not participate simply because they do not know enough about them. This is a perennial issue for every congregation, but now, as we develop a Strategic Plan, we must be careful not to ignore or undermine what is already happening. We need to affirm and support our existing work, and the best way to do this is to make sure everyone knows about it. Therefore, as we move forward with the entire Plan, we must include internal publicity—persistent, high-quality, coordinated publicity—so that both our new plans and our existing efforts are well-known to our own members. In this sense, we affirm that the Strategic Plan is not an effort to change the Society by eliminating or replacing existing strengths, but an effort to grow by building upon these many strengths.

2. Throughout the process of creating mission and vision statements and gathering information for the Strategic Plan, a desire for personal connections rather than large scale impersonal projects was expressed consistently. It is not stated in the Strategic Plan explicitly, but an underlying assumption is that people do not join a congregation to be part of a committee, but to find meaningful connections with others and a community in which they feel safe, welcome, and supported. In everything we choose to do as a community, we must focus on creating a culture of inclusiveness and personal connections and constantly encourage smaller communities to form as people discover shared interests, values, and ministries. We must also nurture these smaller groups because we recognize that as a congregation grows (which the congregation clearly wants), connections will occur most deeply and meaningfully in these smaller groups.
3. In the course of preparing this Strategic Plan, our minister has shared his vision of a community of service as well as connection, based on his belief that spirituality is meaningless if it is not expressed through service. As the poet Kahlil Gibran expressed it: "Is not religion all deeds and all reflection?" meaning that a true relationship with the Holy, however we understand it, calls us to respond in compassion, care, and love through service to others and to the world. An implicit goal of this Plan is that every committed participant in this congregation knows the mission statement by heart, has a ministry (however large or small) that makes best use of their gifts, and can articulate that ministry to others. As we implement this Plan, it is essential that we seek to nurture the gifts each person has to share, we encourage them to offer their gifts in service to one another and the world, and we provide as many opportunities as possible for people to discover their gifts and ministries.
4. In the verbal and written ideas we received, Religious Education for children and youth was clearly recognized as a strength but was not prominent in future goals. We believe this is because RE is a such well-established strength of the Society that it was simply taken for granted as a central aspect of our ongoing work. People focused on the *new* things we would do, rather than the many programs we would continue to support. The explicit ideas the committee received regarding RE for children and youth will be shared with the Board, the minister and the RE Director.

THE THREE-YEAR PLAN

As described above, this plan reflects the vision of the congregation of the Unitarian Universality Society of Iowa City for the next three years. The plan is based on our major Goals as articulated in the mission and vision statements: to lead social justice work, to nurture mind and spirit, to heal the earth, and to grow as a congregation. For each of the strategies, we have identified probable leadership responsibility for implementation. However, these leaders must be able to count on the full participation of many congregational members who are willing to commit their time and energy to doing the work needed. Good ideas don't turn into good works without dedicated workers.

General oversight of implementing the plan will be exercised by the Board and the Committee for Congregational Life and Ministry (CCLAM). This is a living document that will evolve as our congregation grows and changes. An annual review of this plan will be conducted under the leadership of the Past President of the Board. During the review, the plan will be adjusted and expanded another year into the future.

GOAL: LEAD SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK

Objective 1: Expand Social Justice Opportunities For All Ages

(Leadership: Various, See Below)

Actions:

(Year 1)

- * Explore how other congregations fund their social justice activities and make a plan for establishing a regular fund for social justice, possibly a portion of the earnings from the Endowment or a regular budget line. (Leadership: Board)
- * Assess the structure and current membership of SJCC and develop a plan to broaden and diversify participation, balancing local projects with work on global issues. (Leadership: CCLAM, Social Justice Coordinating Committee (SJCC))
- * Publicize to the congregation and the community the social justice activities that the UUSIC currently does.

(Year 2)

- * Expand Circle of Friends activities. (Leadership: Circle of Friends Committee, SJCC)

(Year 3)

- * Expand intergenerational involvement in the service trips – especially with an eye toward cultivating more leadership from adults and integrating age groups. (Leadership: SJCC and Service trip organizers)

(Long-Term)

- * Study the feasibility of establishing a social justice center led by the UUSIC. (Leadership: SJCC, Board)
- * Organize a multigenerational trip to our partner church to inspire a closer connection with that congregation and an interest in helping them.

Objective 2: Build Alliances With Other Local Social Justice Agencies Or Groups

(Leadership: Various, See Below)

Actions:

(Year 1)

- * Survey what groups our individual members volunteer with to see what possibilities there might be. (Leadership: Congregational Life Coordinator)
- * Assist in Free Lunch's transition to the 1105 Project. (Leadership: SJCC)
- * Offer workshops to teach core competencies of partnering with other groups. (Leadership: Leadership Development Committee)

(Year 2)

- * Assess community needs and plan for a major congregation-wide project in collaboration with another group. (Leadership: SJCC and Children and Youth Committee (CYC), possibly in collaboration with the Consultation of Religious Communities (CRC))

(Year 3)

- * Launch the Project planned in Year 2.
- * Explore partnership with groups on campus (e.g., Center for Human Rights, College of Engineering) to partner with service learning projects. (Leadership: SJCC)

(Long-Term)

- * Plan for and implement an inter-church project (or with one other congregation or agency) to work on an issue such as anti-racism or immigration. (Leadership: SJCC)

Objective 3: Expand The Marriage Equality Program

(Leadership: Publicity Committee, Interweave, SJCC, Minister)

Actions:

(Year 1)

- * Announce the ME program to UU congregations and other progressive congregations in surrounding states to invite them to come to Iowa City.
- * Advertise widely in print and electronic media that we perform same-sex weddings.
- * Define and clarify the duties of the Love Bus event coordinator.

(Year 2)

- * Develop a curriculum so that we can teach other congregations how to establish and support a Love Bus program.

(Ongoing)

- * Monitor the political climate and advocate for pro-equality policies.

GOAL: NURTURE THE LIFELONG JOURNEY OF MIND AND SPIRIT

Objective 4: Expand Opportunities For Adult Intellectual Education

(Leadership: Worship Associates, Secular Humanists, special task force)

Actions:

(Year 1)

- * Provide an adult Forum on Sunday mornings in the summer with leadership provided by the Worship Associates.

- * Establish a Lecture Series task force to plan and implement a lecture series for one year. Look to the Secular Humanists for leadership on the Task Force.
 - * Explore available funding to support the series(e.g. Dettiger fund, charging for attendance, etc.).
 - * Partner with other groups within the congregation (Green Sanctuary, Social Justice, CYC, Worship Associates) and in the community (University of Iowa, Coe College, other faith communities, local social justice groups, Prairie Lights) to sponsor lectures.
 - * Plan and provide a 12 month series with established times, venues.
 - * Publicize the series in the larger community, as well as to the congregation.
- (Year 2)
- * At the end of 12 months, evaluate the success of the program, and determine feasibility of continuing, revising, or ending.

Objective 5: Expand Opportunities For Adult Spiritual Education
(Leadership: RE Director, Minister, ad hoc leaders)

Actions:

(Year 1)

- * Expand Welcome Home Wednesday offerings on spiritual topics.
- * Coordinate one lecture on a spiritual topic with the Lecture series.
- * Encourage growth of covenant groups.
- * Promote all the current UUSIC opportunities available for adult spiritual education and practice, including Sunday services, covenant groups, Welcome Home Wednesdays, Theology on Tap, Christian Exploration, and many more, through social networking and other electronic media.

(Year 2)

- * Offer adult Our Whole Lives (OWL) class.
- * Offer an all-congregational read on a selected book with small discussion groups and a sermon on the topic.
- * Nurture a congregational culture of exploring, designing, and presenting new paths to spiritual growth.

(Year 3)

- * Explore ways to provide Sunday adult religious education classes using space external to the church.
- * Provide Sunday adult religious education classes in alternate space.

Objective 6: Explore/Expand Campus Ministry
(Leadership: Campus Ministry sponsor, RE Director, Minister)

Actions:

(Year 1)

- * Assess interest and needs among UI students for a UU campus ministry.
- * Research campus religious groups at the UI to understand what is available and what is successful.
- * Research successful UU campus ministries through the UUA and consult them for possible models.
- * Investigate resources needed and available to provide a campus ministry.

(Year 2)

- * Analyze the information gathered in year one and develop a feasibility plan for a redesigned campus ministry.

GOAL: HEAL THE EARTH

Objective 7: Have A Sustainable, Environmentally-Friendly Building
(Leadership: Facilities Planning Task Force)

Actions:

(Year 1)

- * Reactivate the Facilities Planning Task Force to finish assessing needs of our diverse ministries in light of the Strategic Plan (cf. Objective 11).
- * Use environmental report to assess cost of fixing the current buildings.
- * If we stay in current buildings, develop a plan for greening them.
- * If we build new, use green principles and plan for green use.
- * Incorporate signs/symbols into the building indicating the green principles it embodies.
- * Systematically monitor energy and resource use to improve our green practices.
- * Incorporate green principles and the building's green character into worship.

**Objective 8: Create A Community Garden That Serves The Congregation
And/Or Other Local Agencies**

(Leadership: Special interest group)

Actions—Sequential:

(Year 1)

1. Hold a “UUSIC Community Garden” interest meeting to introduce the project and share ideas.
2. Identify congregational and local needs.
3. Identify available plots and best foods.
4. Write a Garden Plan that discusses cost and feasibility, health and safety, food distribution, etc.

(Ongoing)

5. Select plots. Solicit and train volunteers.
6. Plant, tend, and harvest. Distribute food according to the approved plan.
7. Keep careful records to assist in future planning.
8. Report to the Society on a regular basis.

**Objective 9: Support And Educate Members To Make Green Life Style Changes;
Support Action On Facing Climate Change.**

(Leadership: Green Sanctuary/RE)

Actions:

(Year 1)

- * Consult and coordinate with experts on climate change and green living: UI Faculty, Government, Utilities, Green Businesses.
- * Provide workshops on climate change and green living.
- * Create a blog or site where members can share information and ideas.
- * Identify programs, grants, and subsidies available for projects.
- * Identify green movements or projects the Society can support.
- * Establish a friendly competition among members for energy efficiency at home, in school, etc.
- * Integrate green lessons into worship and church activities.

GOAL: GROWTH

Objective 10: Generate Publicity To Increase Visibility In The Community

(Leadership: Publicity Committee)

Actions:

(Year 1)

- * Form a publicity committee.
- * Allocate and acquire resources for marketing and outreach.
- * Identify free and paid media outlets to promote UUSIC.
- * Identify local festivals and events to promote UUSIC (e.g., Pridefest).

(Year 2)

- * Centralize the management of UUSIC's web and social media presence.
- * Begin promoting UUSIC through outreach events and media outlets.

(Year 3)

- * Evaluate which media outlets and outreach events are most effective.
- * Develop and utilize specific marketing materials for outreach events (e.g., UUSIC t-shirts, business cards, brochures, etc.).

Objective 11: Create Facilities That Meet The Needs Of Our Diverse Ministries

(Leadership: Facilities Planning Task Force)

Actions—Sequential:

(Year 1)

1. Reactivate the Facilities Planning Task Force in February 2013.
2. Utilize the Strategic Plan and other resources to assess UUSIC facility needs and resources and make a recommendation to the Board.

(Year 2)

3. UUSIC will vote on a building decision during the first part of 2014, preferably at the January 2014 congregational meeting, but no later than the May 2014 congregational meeting.
4. Begin UUSIC capital campaign for new or improved building.

(Year 3)

5. Implement building decision.

**Objective 12: Nurture Our Culture Of Radical Hospitality And Welcoming
(Leadership: Congregational Life Coordinator)**

Actions:

(Year 1)

- * Make Congregational Life Coordinator a half-time, paid position.
- * Develop a system to follow up with new members to ensure that they are having a positive experience at UUSIC.
- * Develop a system to reach out to inactive members.
- * Develop a system to improve the quality of our 'first impression' (e.g., ensure visitors are engaged during coffee hour) through the welcome packet and welcome table.

(Year 2)

- * Implement systems above and work to continuously improve our welcoming culture.
- * Promote a sense of community amongst our members using diverse media (e.g., videos, Facebook, Twitter, a "Meet our Members" feature in the newsletter or email updates, etc.).

(Year 3)

- * Offer a variety of formal and informal courses for membership beyond the 3-week course (e.g., Exploratory courses, Specialized courses such as one for young families, Courses targeting active 'friends' of UUSIC).

APPENDIX

UUSIC OPEN FORUM QUESTIONS

UUSIC Vision (adopted September 23, 2012)

Our vision is to be a loving, inclusive, and growing spiritual community. We celebrate life and a liberal tradition that leads social justice work, heals the earth, and nurtures the lifelong journey of mind and spirit.

Our vision articulates the broad categories that constitute our three priorities (among our many interests) that we choose to pursue over the next several years:

Leading Social Justice

Nurturing Mind and Spirit

Healing the Earth

To transform our vision into a reality, our next step together is to identify our **strengths**, the **opportunities** we have to make a difference in these three areas, to convey our **aspirations** for UUSIC, and the **results** that will help us know we are succeeding in leading social justice, nurturing the lifelong journey of mind and spirit, and healing the earth. Let's begin...

STRENGTHS: What can we build on?

1. What Unitarian Universalist or UUSIC work or activities in one or more of these three areas are you most proud of? What strengths are reflected in this?
2. What can we be best at in our community and our world? How might UUSIC *uniquely* lead social justice, nurture the lifelong journey of mind and spirit, and heal the earth?
3. What are our greatest assets that we can use to lead social justice, nurture the mind and spirit, and heal the earth?
4. How do our strengths fit with the realities of our social and political environment?

OPPORTUNITIES: What is Our World Asking For?

1. What two or three opportunities or trends *external* to UUSIC could we tap into to lead social justice, nurture mind and spirit, or heal the earth?
2. What two or three opportunities or trends *internal* to UUSIC could we tap into to lead social justice, nurture mind and spirit, or heal the earth?
3. How can we best partner with others to accomplish our three goals?
4. What new skills or resources will best help us move forward with these opportunities?

ASPIRATIONS: What are Our Dreams for Leading, Nurturing, and Healing?

1. Imagine it is the year 2022 and UUSIC is a vibrant community and your most marvelous dreams have been realized. How, in 2022, are we...
 - a. Leading social justice work?
 - b. Healing the earth?
 - c. Nurturing the lifelong journey of mind and spirit?
2. For one or more of our three priorities, what do you want us to be known for?

RESULTS: How Do We Know We Are Succeeding?

1. What specific steps – **big** steps (projects, initiatives or actions) – could we begin taking now that would demonstrate that we are making progress toward one or more of our goals?
2. How do we tangibly translate Strengths, Opportunities, and Aspirations? What resources are needed to do this?
3. Considering our Strengths, Opportunities, and Aspirations, what meaningful measures would indicate that we are on track to achieving our goals?