

## DEVELOPMENTAL MINISTER ANNUAL REPORT

UU Fellowship of Manhattan, Kansas

April 28, 2019

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A year ago, I reported to you that we were not seeing the growth that we need to sustain full-time ministry. What a difference a year makes!

The context continues to challenge us, with declining interest in religion generally, the transience of the Manhattan area, and the Manhattan population flat if not declining a bit. Somehow, this year, we overcame those challenges and had a significant bump in growth, so that we have our highest membership ever at 131 members. We have upped our game in social media and engaged in community events at a high level.

However, we still need to make a significant shift if we are to position ourselves for future growth, one of our three developmental goals. You will hear during our Annual Meeting about a couple of possibilities – purchasing an available building downtown and moving to two weekly services. I reiterate what I said last year: “Part of our challenge is that going on as we have is comfortable; however, it is not ultimately sustainable.”

We have goals that come before growth, though. Let me report on our activities together during the past year, organizing them around our developmental goals:

### **Strategic Action to Create Strong, Visible, and Socially Active Presence**

1. *Congregational Participation in Social Justice work.* UUFM members and friends have shown up for a number of significant events and causes, including:
  - a. Poor People’s Campaign rallies took place for 6 consecutive weeks last spring and early summer, bringing the topics of systemic racism, poverty and inequality, militarism, and ecological devastation into the public square. Along with members John Exdell and Diane Barker, I was arrested (or cited).
  - b. The Community Housing Study group sponsored study groups over the summer, and we had members among the participants. They recommended 3 specific actions – mandatory rental inspections, a land trust and revitalization efforts in established communities. Members have been active with subsequent activities through the Housing group, MAPJ and Renters Together.
  - c. Kansas People’s Agenda “State of the State” and Medicaid expansion efforts.
  - d. Moms Demand Action.
  - e. Veterans’ Day Witness for Peace (with the Mennonites).
  - f. We had strong representation at the Little Apple Pride Parade and Festival, including helping with set-up, decorations, and registration. Laura Lott served on the Little Apple Pride Committee along with me. We also had members turn out for other LAP activities like Drag Story Hour, Drag Bingo, and social events.
  - g. In response to the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, more than a dozen UUMF members attended the Show Up for Shabbat service at the Manhattan Jewish Congregation.
  - h. As has been true in the past, several of the Board members of Manhattan Alliance for Peace and Justice (MAPJ) are members of the fellowship. A number of other members also participated in MAPJ huddles, actions, and other activities.

2. *Specific congregation-wide efforts.*
  - a. In other reports, you will note what we contributed to the community through Helping Hands and through in-kind goods. Additionally, late this year, we shifted, for a trial period, to giving away the entire undesignated offering during the month to our Helping Hands recipients.
  - b. We did a reverse offering through a special collection, so people gave away (and often matched!) money given to them on a Sunday. Here's part of how we used that money: [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TcA6DTYtc-kqYIW9rnbUtq6gW\\_ihw9PsnwzlaMIckVE/edit#gid=1055013072](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TcA6DTYtc-kqYIW9rnbUtq6gW_ihw9PsnwzlaMIckVE/edit#gid=1055013072) The results were a lovely collection of non-profit donations, gifts to individuals, and buying things for others. Some used the opportunity to commit to regular giving.
  - c. UUFM expanded our involvement with Happy Kitchen to every week instead of every other week. Thanks to Tom Phillips, Rob DeLong (our rep to Common Table), and all those who volunteer regularly.
  - d. We had strong participation in a Love Reaches Out workshop, led by our Regional staff person, Phil Lund. Out of that came our involvement with the Holiday Parade and a few other ideas: providing/selling healthy food at Purple Power Play; holding our Musicale somewhere other than the fellowship where we could invite more people to attend; publicizing OWL more broadly in the community. There was also interest in doing something around gardening, though that was vague. Any of these could happen if there is interest and energy around them.
  - e. We hosted a forum on state issues with Kansas Interfaith Action, well-attended both by our members and community members.
  - f. Little Apple Pride Committee initially held its meetings in our building, but moved into town.
  - g. Expressions of support to the Jewish and Islamic congregations when called for by events elsewhere.
3. *Inside our congregation.* Following up the work of Beloved Conversations, we established a Racial Justice Task Force of more than a dozen people to address racism. To date, we have met with Brian Samuel, the K-State Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, and Susanne Glymour, Chair of the USD 383 Diversity Committee. Several of us also attended a talk by Kevin Wilmott, Academy Award winning writer of *BlackKlansman*, originally from Junction City.
4. *Ministerial involvement.* Because this is one of our priority goals for developmental ministry, I spend significant energy in the area of social action. Besides involvement in many of the efforts listed above, I
  - a. Served as co-chair for MAPJ
  - b. Served as Vice Chair and Parade Coordinator for Little Apple Pride
  - c. Offered training to Crisis Center volunteers on Religion and Domestic Violence twice a year
  - d. Served on the Law Board Ad-Hoc Committee to address issues of race in policing, and also provided input around hiring of the new director.
  - e. Attended events during the year to support Shepherd's Crossing, MESI, and FHHRP.
  - f. Co-led a workshop with other local ministers on "Sustaining Activism for the Long Haul," attended by many community activists.

## **Full-time Ministerial Leadership Model**

### *1. Sunday Services.*

- a. We added Rob Morrison as co-chair with Katie Kingery-Page. Renea Brown also began as Music Director.
- b. We focused on increasing multi-sensory worship, using slides more often, along with other video. We deeply appreciate Doug Walter and his A/V crew. We have also used more experiential activities, especially during Services for All Ages. Eight of our members participated along with UUFT (Topeka) folks in a workshop co-led by our ministers in August.
- c. We committed to doing one Service for All Ages each month. These services have been partially successful, as many parents do not attend with their children. On the other hand, adults have really appreciated the more experiential approach and shorter elements used in these services.
- d. The Two Services Task Force, led by Mark Clarke, recommended in June not to move to two services at that time. Additionally, they recommended focus on social media, targeted mailings, "Invite a Friend Sunday," improved web presence, and periodic services away from the Fellowship in town. Also recommended was reducing our current service to an hour. Most of these recommendations have been, or are being implemented. In the meantime, our attendance has shot up again. So, again we need to think seriously about moving to two services.
- e. We had some weather challenges and cancelled a few Sunday services. For one, I offered a Facebook live in lieu of the service, and many people checked it out either live or later, on video.

### *2. Participation in leadership.*

- a. Our structure remains a mix of organic and structured, with our contemplated reorganization not fully carried out. While we have many volunteers engaged in different aspects of congregational life, we do not have a coherent organizational structure. At our current size, that's probably fine, but if we grow much, we will need to attend to this.
- b. With the mixed way of operating, I did call together some groups that are not organized as committees to do at least one meeting for organizational purposes. One of these was a group for Caring (see below under 5. Pastoral Care). One was for Social Justice, and though our activities are broad and sustained, there is little interest in having a committee function.
- c. I also provided support to other committees, including Communications, Finance, and Facilities, as well as support to individual leaders engaged in particular tasks – Madilena Mendiola with Circle Suppers and Judy Nickelson with organizing an on-campus group.
- d. Kathleen Oldfather, Jessica Sievers and I pulled together former Board chairs to conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, led by outside facilitator David Jones. UUFM is quite fortunate to still have so many former leaders still involved, and we need to continue to draw on their wisdom and keep them connected in ways that nourish them. As a result of the meeting with Board Chairs, we are exploring a trip to Ames, Iowa, to learn from their UU congregation how they grew to be about twice the size we are now, in a very similar context.

- e. Seven of our members attended General Assembly in Kansas City, while a number of others joined in for the Sunday morning service. We also had two delegates to the MidAmerica Regional Assembly, and sent two participants to Leadership School.
  - f. With all the activities going on, we have put reviewing our mission statement on the back burner, but it is not forgotten.
3. *Staff supervision and support.*
- a. We added Music Director Renea (Reasoner) Brown to our staff, and also added 2 substitute pianists – Dustin Hayes and Sam DeLong.
  - b. Key staff meet once monthly for communication, coordination, and support.
  - c. I conduct an annual review of staff, and all are performing satisfactorily.
4. *Pastoral Care.*
- a. UUFM takes care of its people well. I make occasional hospital visits when called in, and often meet with people for pastoral care at Radina's hours, or in a scheduled meeting.
  - b. Thirteen people attended a meeting to discuss caring. We have at least seven people with formal roles (sending cards, visiting, organizing meals, etc.)
5. *Rites of Passage.*
- a. We had no weddings or memorial services this year.

### **Grow in Ways to Support Our Goals**

1. *Membership growth.*
- a. We added the following members this year: Linus (Link) Anton, Amy Betz, Jimmy Bridges, Sarah Bridges, Jeff Brown, Matt Brown, Lily Colburn, Alex Dau, Sarah Desmet, Christian Gilbert, Norah Gilbert, Terry Hardley, Justin Harms, Sara Hazan, Christie Launius, Madilena Mendiola, Claire Nelson, Judy Nickelson, Livia Olsen, Susan Rensing, Dakota Santiago, Becky Sorensen, Heather Wadley, Michelle Washburn-Buck. Also Barbara and Jim Bascom rejoined, having moved back to Manhattan.
  - b. I reviewed our past membership numbers – how many members we add and lose each year, and found that we lose an average of 10 members each year, generally through moving. Each year, we are sad to see good friends – old and new – head to greater opportunities in different places. Some of these are military families, so we know they are likely to move on. Others find new jobs that take them away. In order to maintain actual growth, we need to add more than 10% of our membership each year. This is a great challenge for a congregation of our size. This year, did it! That is something to celebrate.
  - c. We also saw a rebound in attendance, with as many as 20 more people per service during the fall.
  - d. Shirley Hobrock keeps our membership efforts ticking.
2. *Social Media, Outreach, Communications:*
- a. August services were focused on Unitarian Universalism to provide a good introduction to visitors. We also made up postcards people could pass out to invite friends. We will replicate this this year.
  - b. We added an Instagram account this year, and have 119 followers. There is much overlap between what we post on Instagram and what we post on Facebook. Katie Kingery-Page is our primary poster.
  - c. Facebook remains our primary outreach and inreach social media tool, inreach being through our UUFM Coffee and Conversation group and outreach through Unitarian

Universalist Fellowship of Manhattan page. We have 367 likes on our Facebook page and 128 members of UUFM Coffee and conversation. We are using Soul Matters media packets to supplement our local efforts (on both Facebook and Instagram), posting 10-12 times a week, generally. Taryn Cipra posts our Soul Matters materials on Facebook. The post of my arrest with the Poor People's Campaign got far and away the most exposure and engagement, with 1500+ reached. Over the course of the year, we had several posts with more than 300 reached: response to the Manhattan visit by the Westboro Baptist Church (who specifically targeted us; 696 reached), Why Visiting a UU Church Matters (516), pictures from our Animal Blessing service in October (457), our heartbreak in response to the Pittsburgh synagogue shootings (375), Happy Fall Equinox (363), and a couple of our Soul Matters memes (384 and 411).

- d. We are working on an update to our website, moving to the WordPress theme developed by the UUA,  
<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.uua.org/communications/websites/wordpress-theme&sa=U&ved=0ahUKewiZx OeztrhAhUIvVkKHVoBBogQFggEMAA&client=internal-uds-cse&cx=007175923080295419477:cbowmcgn4uu&usg=AOvVaw0c4y8dMuBUYB74LbmSnGzc>
- e. We participated this year in Juneteenth, Purple Power Play, the Mayor's Holiday Parade, and Little Apple Pride. We also advertised in the *Mercury's* back to school issue and hosted a concert by touring UU musician Jim Scott.
- f. Many thanks to Communications Chair Marisa Larson and webmaster Mark Clarke.

- 3. *Path to Membership*. We shortened our Path to Membership class to one class, and held it about every other month. So, I added classes open to everyone before services once a month on UU History and Theology. These were well-attended, generally drawing about 8-12 people, with excellent discussion. We were able to go more into depth on these topics than we did with these classes when they were part of Path to Membership.

4.

### **Look Forward to**

UUFM will be making significant decisions about its future during the coming year. Leadership needs to propose funding strategies that are sustainable, while we move towards funding a building (to be determined) to better meet our needs and accommodate growth. While there are many small things I look forward to in the coming year, this is the big one.

One of the most important things to remember is that growth is never for growth's sake alone. We grow in order to advance Unitarian Universalist principles and values in our world. That is, we continually strive to make the world a better place for all to live in, a more welcoming and nurturing place for all people, those like us and those different from us. UUFM is making a difference in our community and in the lives of the people touched by UUFM, members, friends, and even people who have not yet heard of us. And that is what matters.

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