

**WORDS INTO ACTION:
UUCA STRATEGIC PLAN 2011**

The mission of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron is to be a welcoming and loving community for all, dedicated to meaningful and inspirational worship and lifelong spiritual growth. We find strength in diversity and commit to be a prominent force for social justice and stewardship of the earth. We aspire to take very good care of ourselves, each other, and the world.

PREAMBLE

Following the adoption of our mission statement in April of 2010, the Board of Trustees set into motion the development of a strategic plan. A team was appointed (Warren Brown, Karen Hoch, Melonie Michelson, Rob Sturr, and John and Tina Ughrin) and charged with creating a process to solicit ideas and to discern the will of the congregation. The team reviewed previous congregation-wide surveys and other data and then created a new survey which was conducted in January of 2011. Between 40% and 50% of the congregation responded and the results were analyzed. This data was provided to a gathering of over 40 congregational leaders at the “Words Into Action Summit” held on February 26, 2011. This summit produced goals for living our mission. The Strategic Planning Team took the results of the summit and formulated this plan.

The contents of this plan are ambitious and wide-ranging. The ideas represent the collective courage and imagination of the congregation. Implementing it will require flexibility, collaboration and energy. In addition to the specific goals of the plan, we recommend that the Board of Trustees

- Take responsibility for the overall implementation of the plan and charge the Committee on Ministries to serve as the evaluative body.
- Re-examine the organizational structure of the church.
- Cultivate and develop a wider circle of leaders.
- Undertake regular assessment of the plan, in conjunction with the Committee on Ministries.
- Recognize that many of these goals will require increased financial commitment from the congregation and therefore oversee the development of a comprehensive fundraising strategy.

As we strive to turn these words into action and to live our mission, the UU Church of Akron sets the following goals, which are to be achieved over the next five years.

WELCOMING AND LOVING COMMUNITY

Our current Unison Affirmation states, “Love is the doctrine of this church” and the UU Church of Akron seeks, above all else, to be a community guided by love. Love leads us to welcome and celebrate all who want to share their spiritual lives with us, to respect and cherish one another, and to create greater opportunities to build a sense of community, connection, and belonging among our members.

In order to live our mission of being a welcoming and loving community for all, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron will:

- Create a Publicity Team to work with the minister and church administrator to encourage new visitors to our church through the use of print and social media.
- Investigate establishing a campus ministry at the University of Akron by making contacts with sympathetic groups on campus and participation in events which bring ecumenical groups together.
- Deepen the integration of new members into our congregation by establishing a mentoring program for new members.
- Enhance our sense of community by (re)establishing activities like Circle Suppers, Java Jive, and Movie Nights.
- Revise our Behavioral Covenant.

LIFELONG SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron is dedicated to spiritual growth for children, youth, and adults. Recognizing that our current program for children and youth is one of our greatest strengths, we will create an Adult Spiritual Enrichment Team to work with the Minister and Director of Religious Education to develop a vision for adult spiritual enrichment and oversee our classes and programs. The Adult Spiritual Enrichment Team will:

- Work with a variety of groups within the congregation to offer 2 to 3 new adult RE classes each year. The classes will reflect the values and goals articulated in our mission statement, as well as support other ministries within the congregation.
- Identify lay leaders who can teach adult religious education and develop a structure for training and supporting them.
- Facilitate the creation of new adult spiritual enrichment groups and offer support to existing groups.

LIFELONG SPIRITUAL GROWTH (CONTINUED)

- Working with existing committees (Religious Education) and ministries (UUCA Family Network, COYA, Young Adult Ministry), the Adult Spiritual Enrichment Team will identify inter-generational opportunities connected to our mission statement (Social Justice, Stewardship of the Earth, etc).
- Create fellowship and community building programs like the “Special Friends” that bring diverse generations within our congregation together.

MEANINGFUL AND INSPIRATIONAL WORSHIP

Worship is at the center of our spiritual and communal life. We worship to explore, to grow, to experience awe and wonder, to be challenged and inspired, and to celebrate the beauty and the joy of religious community. Recognizing that our worship life includes Sunday morning worship as well as alternative worship opportunities (e.g. Friday Night Alive), we will:

- Create service themes and sermons drawing from all Six UU Sources that are deep, diverse, challenging, and that support our mission and ministries.
- Enrich and extend uniquely UUCA traditions and rituals, including those drawn from diverse religious sources and from our own Unitarian Universalist tradition (e.g., flower communion, Interdependence day).
- Increase diversity of voices and perspectives through
 - Increased lay participation in Sunday services.
 - Welcoming guest ministers and speakers.
 - Regular testimonials and the sharing of spiritual journeys from our members.
- Build on our outstanding music program by encouraging greater diversity of music and musical styles and more participation from the congregation, including inter-generational participation.
- Create more opportunities for contemplation and reflection (e.g., prayer, guided meditation, silence).

STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron finds strength in diversity. We welcome and celebrate differences of age, gender, religious belief, sexual orientation, race, class, political opinion, nationality, ethnicity, etc. In order to celebrate and draw strength from diversity, we will create a Diversity Task Force charged with:

- Examining our congregational life to identify those whose voices are missing or underrepresented.
- Helping our congregation explore ways of creating a more inclusive environment, including our use of physical space as well as our spiritual life.
- Collaborate with other UUCA ministries and the Akron Area Interfaith Council to educate our congregation about different faith traditions and to build relationships with diverse faith communities.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron strives to live our UU principles and values by being a prominent force for social justice. We will engage in meaningful social action activities (through education, service, witness, and justice) on issues of importance to our congregation. While we give priority to acting locally, our social concern and activism are also national and global.

Drawing on our congregation's existing social action priorities as well as the results of recent surveys and conversations, we charge the Social Action Coalition, in cooperation with other UUCA ministries, with coordinating our efforts in the following areas:

- Economic Inequality, including and especially the problems of hunger, poverty, and homelessness in the greater Akron area.
- Racism and Oppression, including but not confined to our existing programs dealing with Immigration and LGBTQ rights.
- Peacemaking and Human Rights.

Additionally, The Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron will engage in a congregation-wide social action project that is inclusive, inter-generational, and collaborative. While the project may be connected to one of the social action priorities identified above, it need not be confined by them. The Board will identify an inclusive process for choosing the project and encourage a broad variety of ideas from members of the congregation.

STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron affirms the 7th principle of Unitarian Universalism, “Respect for the Interdependent Web of Existence, of which we are a part.” To that end, we seek to be a prominent force for stewardship of the earth and set the following goals:

- Complete all requirements of the Green Sanctuary certification by the autumn equinox of 2012. Obtain Green Sanctuary status by the winter solstice of 2012 and prepare to obtain re-certification.
- Within a year, develop a plan to create a multifunctional, inter-generational Grounds Program. Although this would be primarily a Green Team function, it would affect and would need support from Building and Grounds, Facilities Panel, Worship, Spiritual Growth, the Diversity Task Force and SAC. Within five years this program will:
 - provide organically-grown food for ourselves and for others.
 - improve the natural beauty of our grounds using trees, non-toxic products, and native plants.
 - create a meaningful, multi-traditional sacred space for gatherings.
 - encourage multi-faith gardening via shared plots.
 - sustain an outdoor classroom for our children and for others.
 - raise funds by staffing a booth at a farmer’s market.
- Within the current year, share the results of our energy audit with the congregation. Within two years, develop a measurement of the congregational carbon footprint. By the vernal equinox of 2013, commit to a sustainability plan that will include one capital improvement (equal to or greater \$10K) to significantly reduce our footprint. Within five years, we will complete the improvement and celebrate the results of our footprint reduction with the congregation.
- In partnership with the Adult Spiritual Enrichment Team and the Social Action Coalition, the Green Team will develop a plan to host an environmental speaker series in order to increase congregational and community knowledge of the issues.