

Mid-South District Unitarian Universalist Association

2014-2015 Annual Report



Annual Business Meeting
April 18, 2015
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Montgomery
Montgomery, Alabama

**Mid-South District
Unitarian Universalist Association**

Annual Reports • 2014-2015

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Mid-South District Unitarian Universalist Association

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Southern Region Unitarian Universalist Association

www.uuasouthernregion.org

Lead Executive: Reverend Kenn Hurto, khurto@uua.org

**Mid South District Unitarian Universalist Association
Annual Meeting Business Agenda
April 18, 2015
Montgomery, Alabama**



| | |
|---|---|
| Welcome and Introductions | DeAnn Peterson, President MSD |
| Call to Order | DeAnn Peterson |
| Credentialing report and quorum certification | Christine Freeman, Secretary MSD |
| Approval of Agenda | DeAnn Peterson |
| Approval of Minutes AA 2014 | DeAnn Peterson |
| President's Report | DeAnn Peterson |
| Treasurer's Report | Bob Day, Treasurer MSD |
| GIFT Update | Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, UUA Director of Stewardship and Development and Special Advisor to the President |
| Regional Staff Report | Rev. Carlton Smith |

New Business

- Regionalization overview
- Board motion for Dissolution
- Approval of 2015-2016 Southern Region UUA Budget
- Election of Officers---as necessary
- Adjourn

Mid South District
ANNUAL MEETING
UU Metro Atlanta North Congregation
Roswell, Georgia
April 26, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 12:57 p.m.

As Opening Words, the UU Leaders Prayer was read.

Quorum

Christine Freeman, secretary, announced that a quorum was present. Fourteen congregations were represented, by 54 delegates.

Minutes

The minutes of the 2013 Annual Meeting were approved unanimously, as written.

Treasurer's Report

Bob Day, treasurer, and Kirk Bogue, president, gave financial reports for the District and for the Southern Region. There was brief discussion regarding the process of combining the finances of the four districts within the Southern Region, their respective differing proportional responsibilities for the Region's finances, and the reasons for slight variations between budgeted and actual expenses. Bob noted that a CPA had reviewed finances for FY2011 and FY2012, in preparation for transition to the Region format.

The Mid South District budget for FY2015 was discussed, and approved without opposition. Next year, the FY2016 budget will cover the Southern Region, and there will not be a separate Mid South District budget.

GIFT

Rev. Kenn Hurto discussed the GIFT program, which has been developed to allow a single "ask" financial request, that would provide fund to both the UUA and the region. He noted that the congregation in the Southern Region have been the best performing districts in the UUA.

Leadership Development Committee

The Committee submitted nominations for vacant Board seats. DeAnn Peterson was nominated as President, Jill Austin was nominated as Vice President, and Natalie Bigord was nominated as Member at Large. There were no additional nominations from the floor. Those present voted unanimously to elect the nominees to the board.

Staff Update

Rev. Carlton Smith gave a brief report on Southern Region staff activities.

Presidents' Clusters

Jill Austin reported on the process of building Presidents' Clusters throughout the district. She also discussed the Presidents Convocation, planned for July 11-13, 2014 in Birmingham, Alabama. All four districts are scheduling their presidents' convocations for the same time frame, albeit in different locations. It is permissible to attend a convocation for a different district from your own.

President's Report

Kirk Bogue reported on the proposed plan for the Chalice Lighters program. He noted that the former Chair of the program committee withdrew in December, so the first call for 2014 is delayed and Kirk will serve as Interim Chair. The next call will be for the benefit of the UU Fellowship of Clarksville, Tennessee, which is building a new church.

Kirk Bogue spoke of the year's work by the board and the region; the importance of organizational structure; holding the UUA accountable; and the implementation of GIFT as one way to be in covenant with the national organization. He said that despite the move to a Southern Region form of structure, the Mid South District is not "going away." He noted that the district is in good health.

Recognitions

Kirk Bogue gave special recognition to members of the UUMAN congregation, who had worked hard to create superb meals and hospitality for the Assembly; to the speakers at the Assembly; to the Board members; and to the Southern Region staff.

DeAnn Peterson presented Kirk with a recognition of his hard work and leadership on implementing the Orlando platform.

Next Meeting

The next Annual Assembly will be held on April 17-18, 2015.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:13 p.m. EDT.

Sincerely,

Christine A. Freeman
Mid South District Secretary

District Presidents' Report – Feb. 18, 2015

The past 12 months have been transformational for the Southern Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Drawing inspiration and wisdom from the words of those who came before us to shape the revolutionary ideas that emerged from the 2010 Orlando Platform – with roots in the 1648 Cambridge Platform – we are in the process of implementing structures that match our theology.

Those structures include:

- **Enhanced linkage**, including more frequent and purposeful communication, between congregations and our Unitarian Universalist Association Board of Trustees, to ensure a stronger voice in governance;
- Establishment of a **Regional Advisory Council**, to provide formal and regular discussion between lay leaders, religious professionals, Southern Region staff and our UUA Director of Congregational Life, to ensure our operations and programs are serving our needs;
- Forming and strengthening **Clusters** and **Networks**, made up of congregations working in covenant with other congregations with a shared geography or shared interests;
- Designating **Elders** – wise leaders of any age – who are deeply grounded in Unitarian Universalism and who, in shared ministry with our staff and other religious professionals, help make congregational connections.

In implementing these structures, the four District boards and our UUA Congregational Life staff look to develop deep relationships that lay a foundation and can serve as a model for a strengthened Unitarian Universalism among our more than 30,000 members in 218 congregations in 12 states, Mexico and the Virgin Islands. The relationships that we have cultivated already and expect to grow transcend geography, and provide a blueprint for how our faith can make a difference in the world.

Discovering the value of new connections led to re-evaluating historic relationships and the roles of governing boards in each of our Districts. We previously ended co-employment of our staff and moved to a consolidated budget for the region, leaving few governing responsibilities. We put aside our own district ends so as not to duplicate our UUA ends, which are developed by trustees we all elect at General Assemblies.

Since a September 2013 meeting at The Mountain of the four boards, staff, our UUA Moderator Jim Key and our UUA Director of Congregational Life Rev. Scott Tayler, we have spent much time in discussions that affirm the importance of Districts as collaborative ministries pulling congregations together. Now, we are proposing our congregations move forward with the next step.

At each of our four District Annual Assemblies this April, we will be asking for our congregations' approval to dissolve our District governance.

Should our congregations approve dissolving District governance, here's what we envision the Southern Region of the UUA will look like going forward:

- Congregations will recognize their own elders, who can serve at a congregational, cluster, regional or even national level. Elders can serve Unitarian Universalism on boards or councils, as consultant, teachers or small group leaders. They can represent the larger Association at ceremonial events, joining as one strong body to evangelize the South for Unitarian Universalism. A regional Council of Elders working in shared ministry with staff will help congregations recognize and celebrate elders and identify opportunities for service. Elderhood provides greater opportunities for our members to deepen their understanding of covenant and faith and enter into shared ministry.
- Congregations will think beyond their own walls and join with others of similar size, or in close geographic proximity, or facing similar challenges and opportunities, to work for justice, to worship, and to create new paths for spiritual exploration and growth. The basis for this behavior can be found in the idea, expressed many ways by many faiths, that we love our neighbors as ourselves, and the understanding that we are stronger together than we are alone.
- Our Unitarian Universalist Association will manage the financial administration of our funds through a restricted funds process and a Covenant of Understanding, defining the rights and responsibilities of both our UUA and the Southern Region. An interim Fiduciary Oversight Committee will work with UUA staff to provide oversight in finances and staffing levels for two years.
- Our Southern Region Staff will work in shared ministry with congregations, elders, clusters and other constructs that serve to further the faith.

- Our UUA Board will be accountable to the member congregations of the Southern Region through congregational participation and voting at the UUA General Assembly, with our UUA Trustees conducting deliberate and regular Linkage outreach to congregations in the Region. This Linkage work already has begun. UUA Trustees and designated volunteers conducted lengthy one-on-one interviews with lay leaders and ministers of 100 congregations about how we gather at General Assembly and how we govern as an Association, with additional input sought through an online survey distributed nationwide. Trustees will use feedback received in the process they have undertaken to ensure governance is more democratic and effective.
- Our UUA Director of Congregational Life will call on an advisory council of eight regional leaders to provide input to the Southern Region staff about program priorities and goal setting and to assist in assessment of programming impact.

The work we do is grounded in covenant, deep promises to each other made in faith, which has enhanced the efforts of our District boards, our District Presidents and our Congregational Life staff as we agreed on how we wanted to be together.

Our four District presidents, who met by telephone bi-weekly, began our gatherings with check-ins so that we could better understand each other, including how deeply the desire to grow Unitarian Universalism ran through our core; that imbued us with the trust to call – and be called –back into covenant when we got off course.

Our District Presidents also met face-to-face two times during the past year – joining the Congregational Life staff for part of their retreat in Austin, Texas in September 2014, and at the District President’s Association in Boston, Mass. in November 2014.

Many of our District Board Members also built relationships across geographic lines as they worked on Regional task forces, focused on Elders, the Democratic Process and Communications.

District trustees participated in a joint meeting of the District boards in late January, to get a first look at and provide input into the information we presented during a series of webinars in February and March. In these webinars, we outlined a vision for how the Region will function going forward and we listened deeply to

the questions and wisdom of our lay leaders, religious professionals and congregational members.

With the proposed regionalization of our four Districts, we will be able to better use our time, talent and treasure to grow recognition and reach of Unitarian Universalism throughout the South, making a faithful difference in our world.

Respectfully submitted,

Margie Manning, President, Florida District

DeAnn Peterson, President, Mid-South District

Denise Rimes, President, Southeast District

Mark Anderson, Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Conference of the UUA

On behalf of our District Boards of Trustees

**Southern Region UUA
Balance Sheet
As of June 30, 2014**

CURRENT ASSETS

Bank Accounts

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| SWC Checking | 38,644.07 |
| MSD Checking | 22,918.64 |
| MSD Chalice Lighter Checking | 1,006.54 |
| FLD Checking | 18,446.93 |
| FLD Money Market | 112,598.59 |
| SR Checking | 300,908.08 |
| Total Bank Accounts | \$494,522.85 |

Investment Accounts

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| SWC UUA CEF | 149,976.61 |
| MSD UUA CEF | 31,458.83 |
| SED UUA CEF | 77,865.42 |
| Total Investment Accounts | \$259,300.86 |

TOTAL ASSETS

\$753,823.71

CURRENT LIABILITIES

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Payroll Liabilities | 4895.56 |
| Chalice Lighters | 74226.22 |
| SWC Audit Accrual Fund | 7,500.00 |
| FLD Growth Reserve Fund | 14,402.24 |
| FLD Leadership Reserve Fund | 262.09 |
| FLD Program Consultant Reserve | 16,028.59 |
| Florida Fund Endowment | 23,931.87 |
| SED Association Sunday Return | 12,469.04 |
| FLD DE Discretionary | 410.07 |
| FLD Annual Assembly Reserve | 4,079.68 |
| FLD Racial Justice Reserves | 117.67 |
| FLD Disaster Relief - Wider Community | 10,965.84 |
| FLD Disaster Relief Fund | 3,932.75 |
| FLD Witness for Justice Fund | 1,865.25 |
| MSD Mississippi Fund | 4,013.63 |
| MSD Anti-Torture Grant | 1,500.00 |
| MSD Severe Storm Fund | 770.00 |
| MSD UPI Program Fund | 6,746.86 |
| MSD Rome GA Dissolution | 1,911.83 |
| SED Bending the Arc | 1,676.84 |
| SED Laurel Amabile Fund | 500.00 |
| SED Youth Gathering Grant | 118.75 |
| SED Youth Trustee Fund | 1,000.00 |
| SED 2014 Racial Justice Conference | 7,000.00 |
| SWC CYA Scholarship Fund | 544.00 |
| SWC Friends of the District Fund | 4,521.89 |
| SWC CEF Endowment | 149,976.61 |
| SR Event Scholarship Fund | 10.68 |
| Affiliate FLD Southwest Cluster | 2,552.02 |
| Affiliate SED Living Legacy Pilgrimage | 28,585.84 |
| Affiliate SED Civil Rights Vets Gathering | 2,826.66 |
| Total Current Liabilities | \$389,342.48 |

TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES

EQUITY

| | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Organizational Equity | 315,076.12 |
| Net Income | 49,405.11 |

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY

\$753,823.71

Southern Region UUA
Budget vs. Actuals: Southern Region - FY14 P&L
July 2013 - June 2014

| | Actual | Budget |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| INCOME | | |
| GIFT Income | 543,107.89 | 574,483.00 |
| APF Grant | 137,624.00 | 137,624.00 |
| UUA Shared Staffing | 333,783.65 | 342,203.00 |
| Program Registration Fees | 160,339.30 | 200,000.00 |
| Marketplace Sales | 4,062.25 | |
| Other Program Income | 2,130.00 | |
| Congregational Consulting Income | 9,382.29 | 6,000.00 |
| Interest Income | 2,866.25 | 1,900.00 |
| Investment Income | 6,747.33 | |
| Donations | 262.30 | 5,000.00 |
| Other Income | 3,347.76 | |
| TOTAL INCOME | \$1,203,653.02 | \$1,267,210.00 |
| EXPENSES | | |
| General and Office Expense | 10,059.77 | 15,400.00 |
| Equipment and Leases | 4,745.68 | 4,628.00 |
| Insurance | 6,399.42 | 6,000.00 |
| Telecommunications | 9,700.60 | 15,600.00 |
| Contracted and Other Services | 47,619.03 | 68,700.00 |
| Taxes | 100.00 | |
| Board and Governance Expenses | 49,482.02 | 48,100.00 |
| Stewardship Expenses | | 3,000.00 |
| Administrative Staff Salaries | 134,138.28 | 123,578.00 |
| Congregational Life Staff Salaries | 622,268.65 | 650,307.00 |
| Administrative Staff Professional Expense | 5,281.71 | 10,000.00 |
| Congregational Life Staff Professional Expense | 103,458.92 | 105,000.00 |
| Payroll Expense | 5,675.20 | 8,959.00 |
| District Workshops and Programs | 136,608.14 | 175,000.00 |
| Committee Expenses | | 9,600.00 |
| Gifts and Caring | 2,196.49 | 5,400.00 |
| Congregational Consulting Expenses | 16,514.00 | 43,091.00 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$1,154,247.91 | \$1,292,363.00 |
| NET INCOME | \$49,405.11 | (\$25,153.00) |



Southern
Region



Report of the Lead Executive for the Southern Region – Unitarian Universalist Association

The Reverend Kenneth Gordon Hurto
Spring 2015

We Are Building a New Way

Envisioning the New Way:

In his 1852 novel, *The Blithedale Romance*, Unitarian Nathaniel Hawthorne recollected his experience some years earlier as part of Brook Farm, an experiment in utopian, communal living west of Boston. He trenchantly noted:

We were of all creeds and opinions, and generally tolerant of all.... We were... agreed as to the inexpediency of lumbering along with the old system any farther. As to what should be substituted, there was much less unanimity.

Over five years ago, District Leaders, inspired by then UUA Moderator Gini Courter and our current Moderator, Jim Key, were challenged to look back nearly fifty years and to ask whether Districts were the best way for our UUA to serve congregations. In December 2010, nearly 60 Board leaders from the Florida, Mid-South, Southeast and Southwestern Districts, plus field and UUA staff, met to consider the question. They agreed that the old system was no longer serving us well. They crafted the *Orlando Platform*,¹ a blueprint calling for cross-District collaboration as a substitute. Soon thereafter, the field staff began serving the entire Region and the District Presidents met to coordinate the implementation of a collaborative ministry.

In September 2013, the four Boards² and staff met again to review what had been learned. All agreed that reducing the size of the Boards and the sharing of staff and programs proved economically more efficient and opened ways to a more broadly-shared ministry. No longer constrained by District boundaries, the focus shifted to congregation-to-congregation sharing based on geographical clusters, to creating new affinity-interest based configurations independent of location,³ and to state-wide networks of social witness. Our small staff offered their talents throughout the Region while each remained in the role of “primary contact” for 30-35 of our 216 congregations.

In the midst of these changes, the Boards (because we are bold!) agreed to a request from the UUA *Stewardship & Development Office* to pilot a project named **GIFT** (*Generously Investing in Tomorrow*),⁴ GIFT does away with separate appeals for Fair Share gifts for the District and the UUA Program Fund. Instead, a single **Ask** supports both our UUA and the Region. GIFT relies not on a membership “head tax;” rather, it asks for a percentage (7%)⁵ of a congregation’s operating expenses. Although it has been a challenge for some (not all) of our congregations to increase their combined District/UUA giving to that level, all agree this is a more equitable and covenantal approach to funding our overall ministries.

Now Is the Time for a New Way:

Now, this month, the Boards ask congregational delegates to boldly craft a new way of being together — as a single, cultural and program ministry known as the **Southern Region — UUA**. Five years of reflection, trial (and a few errors), and trust-building have led the four Boards unanimously to recommend the disincorporation of Districts as governance/business entities.⁶

Over many months, your Boards have crafted a **Covenant of Understanding**⁷ with our UUA that captures the spirit and intent of a new way of being together and providing services to our congregations going forward.

None thinks we have utopia, but we have great faith in a new way that:

- Calls for our lay leaders to work together as wise leaders, guided by our UUA Congregational Life Consultants and a *Council of Elders*.⁸ These “elders” will leverage staff capacity to strengthen the formation of clusters as the primary means of inter-congregational cooperation.
- Ensures direct connection with our staff and our UUA through a new *Advisory Council*,⁹ with lay and religious professional volunteers from each District. They will advise the UUA Director of Congregational Life, *Scott Tayler*, and the Region’s Lead Executive to ensure the efficacy of our field services, the responsiveness of staff to congregational needs, and to assist the UUA Board of Trustees in their linkage work.
- Makes all our staff UUA employees with full benefits.
- Transfers business operations (financial and personnel management) to our UUA.
- Secures the Region’s assets in a General Reserve fund whose purpose will be to support the ministries of the Southern Region. Each District will appoint a representative to a Fiduciary Oversight Committee to ensure our interests.

The hope, the promise of these recommendations is to provide more talent, volunteer and paid, to nurture our congregation’s well being and to increase the impact of Unitarian Universalism in the Region. Full details of the plans, including a *Frequently Asked Questions* document, are on our web site.

I urge your support of the Board’s recommendations.


Southern Region Finances

The Region’s financial reports are reported elsewhere by the Treasurers. The bottom line for FY2013-14: we had predicted a modest deficit but ended the year ahead of where we began.

| | FY13/14 Actual | FY13/14 Budget | Variance in \$ | Variance from expectation |
|---------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Income | \$1,203,653 | \$1,267,210 | -\$63,557 | 95% |
| Expense | <u>\$1,154,247</u> | <u>\$1,292,363</u> | <u>-\$138,115</u> | 89% |
| Net | \$ 49,406 | \$ -25,153 | \$74,558 | |

Our surplus was mostly the result of tight cost controls throughout the year. We were not surprised but still disappointed that the first year of GIFT yielded ~\$31,000 less than we had hoped.¹⁰ For this year, FY2014-15, we have planned for a balanced budget of \$1,219,154 income and expenses.

FY2013/14 was the first year of a truly integrated budget (rather than four separate budgets). The Region’s finances were professionally reviewed by an auditing firm in the fall of 2014; these reviews indicated our books accounted for all monies.



As of 31 March, 2015, our preliminary Balance Sheet indicates total assets of \$528,500 and total liabilities of \$333,841. The District Boards have directed the staff to merge or liquidate various internal liabilities (totaling approximately \$112,963 at this time) to simplify our structure. With approval of the SWC's delegates, the SWC endowment will be transferred to U-Bar-U. Funds we have been holding for other Unitarian Universalists groups will be disbursed back to those entities. Chalice Lighter funds currently on hand will be disbursed to recipient congregations or credited to upcoming calls. All remaining assets/equity as of 6/30/2015 will be invested in the UUA Common Endowment Fund, with the caveat that those monies may be used only for Southern Region programming.

Next year's draft budget, FY2015/16, anticipates \$1,215,500 for income and expense. This assumes our overhead will decrease by about \$30,000 with the transfer of our financial operations to the UUA. Those savings will be re-allocated to new program ministries

Each February 1st, congregations file certification details to our UUA. This year's data again note that the Southern Region is growing modestly: 1.2% to 30,818; this represents a 13% growth rate over ten years. Regrettably, our UUA totals declined for the fifth straight year, to 156,620. Children's Religious Education enrollment reflects the same overall pattern.

Southern Region Field Staff Team

Our professional field staff provide most of the direct UUA service to our congregations. The team's work is guided by the UUA Board's *Ends*, the Congregational Life group's "*Three I's — Innovation, Impact, & Interconnection*," District Boards' oversight, and our team's work plan. All members serve the Region as needed. For the first time in three years, we have had a stable field staff complement of seven consultants.


With *Glenn Johnson's* retirement, we closed the SED office last summer; thus, all four District office operations now have been brought together into the Orlando, Florida office, superbly managed by *Jessica Curren*. A huge benefit of consolidation has been up-grading *Kathy Charles* to just over ½ time as our meeting logistics planner and *Christine Purcell* full-time as our Communications/IT Specialist. A staff roster is below.

Our Region's field and administrative staff serve two overall goals: to strengthen Unitarian Universalism in the South, and to provide leadership development to congregations and emerging "beyond congregation" networks. In addition to direct work with leaders and on-site engagements, the staff offer a number of events, usually with a host congregation or at a cluster gathering, or at "camp" settings.

These are our every year offerings:

- The Dwight Brown, the Southern Unitarian Universalist, and, with 2015, Smaller Congregation *Leadership Experiences*, typically, are held in August.
- Each July, we offer four *Convocations* of Presidents, one in each District.
- Additionally, we offer "*Toolbox*" weekend trainings in the Fall and Spring
- *Start-up workshops* with Boards and new professional religious leaders take place throughout the year.

The UUA Congregational Life field staff are "deep generalists," with very broad capacities. Each year, there are emerging needs and opportunities for which we provide one day or weekend events — covering everything from worship to youth programming, from stewardship to board retreats, from conflict management to social witness, and so on.



At a more personal level, we provide consultation for congregations facing transitions in religious professionals, for congregations in conflict, and direct support to religious professionals and lay leaders. Routinely, we teach best practices for stewardship training and consultation, growth management, governance and congregational assessment. The staff team presents at cluster gatherings, supports the District Boards, and fulfills assignments from the UUA.

When we cannot do something, we most certainly know where to find someone who can. In addition to our team, we have many *Smart Church* trained consultants and other UUA staff to call upon. So, congregational leaders, we urge your participation in the many program offerings around the Region. Please, call often and long before you think you need help (particularly around conflict).

All this detail serves one goal: Strengthening our work together. Since our origins, our faith has been a reforming ministry, ever seeking a better way to promote human dignity, respect for persons and our world.

In a time of great change and high anxiety, too often, we learn of horrid injustice arising out of greed for power, blatant hatred, racial bigotry or fear of difference. The call of our times often feels daunting.

However, we are a bold people. We have, can, and will stand on the side of Love. Thank you all, good leaders for your witness and dedication. With deep appreciation for our congregations, their leaders, and our shared ministries, I thank you for this opportunity to serve.

Kenn

The Reverend Kenneth Gordon Hurto
Lead Executive, Southern Region — UUA

The Congregational Life Southern Region Staff Team 2015

Natalie Briscoe, Austin, TX ♦
nbriscoe@uua.org (south and west Texas)

Kathy Charles, Houston, TX ♦
kcharles@uua.org (event planning, logistics)

Jessica Curren, Orlando, FL ♦
jcurren@uua.org (member services, financial administration)

Connie Goodbread, Palm Harbor, FL ♦
cgoodbread@uua.org (southern Florida, South Carolina)

The Reverend Kenneth Gordon Hurto, Ft Myers, FL ♦
khurto@uua.org (team lead, large congregations of Region)


Maggie Lovins, Pensacola, FL ♦
mlovins@uua.org (Georgia, northern Florida)

Kathy McGowan, Durham, NC ♦
kmcgowan@uua.org (North Carolina, southern Virginia)

Christine Purcell, Knoxville, TN ♦
cpurcell@uua.org
(communications, website)

The Reverend Carlton Smith, Holly Springs, MS ♦
csmith@uua.org
(Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama)

The Reverend Susan Smith, Shreveport, LA ♦
ssmith@uua.org (northern Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas)

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- 1 The full text of the *Orlando Platform* can be found at:
<http://www.uuasouthernregion.org/resources/orlandoplatform.html>
 - 2 The grand experiment set in motion in Orlando moved forward thanks to the dedication of your Boards of Trustees from each District. Lest we be remiss and convey that the current state of affairs suddenly emerged, I call your attention to the roster of past leaders. Untold hours and immense talent have made possible moving out of an antiquated and lumbering system. With gratitude, here's the list of past leaders:
<http://www.uuasouthernregion.org/gratitude.html>
 - 3 The advance of audio & visual teleconferencing has opened up new ways of relating. Affinity-clusters are composed of congregational leaders with similar interests or needs. A most successful, working model is the routine meeting of congregational Presidents from our largest congregations. Statewide legislative ministry is another. The staff will support bringing together those groups who have common aspirations regardless of where they are physically located.
 - 4 **GIFT** details, including answers to that pesky “how do I calculate operating expenses,” will be found here: <http://www.uuasouthernregion.org/stewardshipgift.html>. We have been immeasurably supported in the “GIFT roll-out” by UUA Congregational Stewardship Network consultant *Bill Clontz*, of Alexandria, VA. See his excellent counsel about GIFT and Stewardship in general on our website at:
<http://stewardshipfortherestofus.blogspot.com>
 - 5 It was not a careful study, but I did a quick perusal of other denominations. I found many using the same approach as GIFT, with Asks ranging from 5% (Disciples) to 10% (Episcopal, Methodists).
 - 6 The Boards emphasize that going out of business does not mean the end of Districts. Each of these historic groups has a unique culture, identity, and ways of relating. The intent is to lift up and affirm those particularities in program and service delivery as time goes along.
 - 7 The **Covenant of Understanding** spells out in detail how transferring District operations into the UUA management structure will work. It seeks to be clear while adaptable to what we learn during implementation. Our UUA, founded in 1961, has never done this before; hence, we expect the spirit and intent to be the most important part of this, with an understanding that things may not work quite as envisioned in the document.
Readers may like to know that this *Covenant* has been approved by all four District Boards, by me, the Region’s Lead Executive, and UUA Board Moderator *Jim Key*. It also has been vetted and approved by our UUA Administration — including President *Peter Morales*, Chief Operating Office, *Harlan Limpert*, Treasurer & Chief Financial Officer, *Tim Brennan*, Comptroller *Karen Wheeler*, Director of Human Resources, *Rob Molla*, and Director of Congregational Life, *Scott Tayler*.
 - 8 An explanation of the Council of Elders and how it will work is found here:
<http://www.uuasouthernregion.org/resources/pathtoeldership.html>
 - 9 The Region’s Advisory Council team will be staffed by:
The Reverend Ann Marie Alderman, Greensboro, NC Erin Sullivan, Austin, TX
Jill Austin, Murfreesboro, TN The Reverend Mark Walz, Dallas, TX
Jennifer Carver, Tallahassee, FL The Reverend Mark Ward, Asheville, NC
Marguerite Mills, Nashville, TN The Reverend Deanna Vandiver, New Orleans, LA
 - 10 It should be noted in passing that our current income expectations reflect no increases in District or Regional funding since 2008 — the year of the Great Recession. District Fair Share requests (ranging from \$19 to \$23/member) through 2012 had not been increased since 2006. The 7% **GIFT Ask** reflects the historic overall support of the four Districts; it does not include any increase in expectations. That we have been able to do this results directly from the efficiencies of scale found in the move toward a Regional structure.



Southern
Region



Southern Region Program Highlights 2014 – 2015

Our four Districts had a surprising number of events in this last year. While not everything, here are some highlights of our collaborative ministries:

Regional

- Presidential Convocations
- Two Leadership Experiences
- Support & consultation to the Boards regarding Regionalization
 - Working group task forces: *Communications, Democratic Process, Elderhood, Fiduciary Oversight & Governance*
- Completion of *Elderhood Council Design*
- Appointment of *Regional Advisory Council*

The Florida District

Ministerial Transitions

- Venice — Reverend Khleber M.Zandt
- Naples — Reverend Tony Fisher
- Buckman Bridge, Orange Park — Reverend Jack Ford
- Marion County — Reverend Janet Onnie
- Jacksonville — Phillip Baber, Consulting

Cluster & Other Program Events

- Bradenton — Unitarian Universalist & Growth workshop
- Fort Myers — Stewardship workshop
- Stuart — Mission & Covenant workshop
- 1st Orlando, FL — “Freeing the Giant Within” workshop
- St. Augustine — Evolution weekend
- Annual Choral Festival
- Annual Women’s Retreat
- West Central Revival

Board Policy work

- Development of Regional Youth Safety Policy

Milestones

- Marion County, FL — 30th Anniversary
- Tallahassee, FL — 11 of 22 member congregations participated in the 8th Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry in Florida hold Legislative Action Day

Thanks to our Board members

- Margie Manning, Harvey Heckes, Chris Reid, Sarah Ritzman, Al Tweedy*

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The Southeast District

Ministerial Transitions

Chapel Hill, NC — Reverend Thom Belote
Beaufort, SC — Reverend Kevin Tarsa
Glen Allen, VA — Reverend Amy Russell
Brunswick, GA — Reverend Jane Page, consulting
Asheville, NC — Reverend Tandy Scheffler, ordination
Raleigh, NC — Reverend Mary Frances Comer, ordination

Cluster & Other Program Events

Eno River, Durham, NC — Living Legacy Project "Now Is the Time" Racial Justice Conference
Raleigh, NC — 2nd Mass Moral March on the Capitol
The Mountain, Highlands, NC — (SUULE) Southern Unitarian Universalist Leadership Experience
Spartenburg, SC — Unitarian Universalist Leadership
Glen Allen, VA — Tidewater Cluster "Generations Working Together" workshop

Milestones

Providence, RI — Jim Key, Beaufort, SC, leads first UUA General Assembly
Richmond, VA — Dedication after major renovations

In Loving Memory

Norfolk, VA — Death of Reverend Jennifer Slade

Thanks to our Board members

Denise Rimes, Peter Kandis, Martin Bauer, Kathia Shiba, Larry Meisner


The Mid-South District

Ministerial Transitions

Tuscaloosa — Reverend Fred Hammond
Montgomery — Reverend Lyn Hopkins
Atlanta — Reverend Duncan Teague, ordained
Metro North, Atlanta, GA — Reverend Kim Palmer, ordained
Dahlonega & Marietta, GA — Reverend Charlotte Arsenaault, ordained
Macon, GA — Reverend Cassandra Howe

Cluster & Other Program Events

Bay County, Panama City, FL — "Play-Shop" on LGBTQ issues
Oxford, MO — Living Legacy Project & College of Social Justice 50th Anniversary of Mississippi Freedom Summer
Westside Knoxville, TN — Compassionate Communications workshop
Decatur, GA — LREDA Conference
Marietta, GA — "Stewardship for Unitarian Universalists"
Gallant, AL — 1st Multi-Track weekend: Stewardship, Faith development in Film, & for youth, 'Gathering in Gaia's Garden' workshops
Birmingham, AL — Arc of Justice Conference, 50th Anniversary of Selma to Montgomery Marches
1st Church, New Orleans, LA — Conference hosted by Center for Ethical Living, DRUUMM (Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural)



Ministries) and ARE (Allies for Racial Equity). "Healing the Waters:
Decolonizing Our Communities and the Climate Movement"

Congregational Celebrations and Milestones

Clarksville, TN — New sanctuary
Tuscaloosa, AL — 60th Anniversary
Oak Ridge, TN — New building
Huntsville, AL — New building
Marietta, GA — New building
Athens, GA — 60th Anniversary

In Loving Memory

Birmingham, AL — Death of Dorrie Fuchs

Thanks to our Board members

DeAnn Peterson, Jill Austin, Bob Day, Christine Freeman, Natalie Bigord

The Southwestern Conference

Ministerial Transitions

1st Church, Dallas, TX — Reverend Beth Dana
Live Oak, Austin, TX — Reverend Joanna Crawford called to Live Oak UU Church
UUFellowship, Houston, TX & Thoreau Woods, Huntsville, TX — Rev. Tony Lorenzen
1st Church, Austin, TX — Reverend Chris Jimmerson, ordination
Fayetteville, AR — Reverend James Parrish
Georgetown, TX — Reverend Mark Skrabacz
Corpus Christi, TX — Reverend Phil Douglas, retires

Cluster & Other Program Events

Denton, TX — (DBLE) Dwight Brown Leadership Experience
Heart of Texas Cluster, Austin, TX — Extended Leadership Experience
Sequoia State Park, Hulbert, OK — (SWUUSI) Southwest UU Summer Institute
Glen Rose, TX — SWC Fall Conference, "Love Reaches Out"
Lubbock, TX — West Texas Cluster, Annual Gathering
Little Rock, AR — Arkansas Cluster initiates statewide legislative ministry
Oklahoma City, OK — Launch of new West OK Cluster
Austin, TX — OWL Training
Dallas, TX — NTUUC *Standing on the Side of Love* Conference

In Loving Memory

Amarillo, TX — Passing of Gary Shack, Long-Time Elder

Milestones

- Austin, TX — Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry Legislative Action Day involving 27 congregations.
- Benton County, AR — Applying for UUA Membership
- Turley, OK — The Welcome Table missional community now part of UUA pilot program for recognition of non-traditional Unitarian Universalist ministries

Thanks to our Board members

*Mark Anderson, Reverend Mark Walz, Gaye Webb, Lewis Morris, Patricia Withers,
Ben Ditmars, Audrey Peres*

Resolution for Dissolution

of

The Mid-South District of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Be it Resolved that the Board of Trustees of The Mid-South District of the Unitarian Universalist Association moves that the attending congregational delegates give full authority to the Board of Trustees to complete all of the legal and other tasks necessary to dissolve the District or merge the District into a UUA-related entity, on such terms as the Board of Trustees and the UUA may agree.

Plan of Dissolution

of

The Mid-South District

Of the Unitarian Universalist Association

1. Effective of the date of approval of this Plan of Dissolution by the Board of Trustees of The Mid-South District (a nonprofit religious organization) with no state incorporation and the District's member congregations, the Plan of Dissolution shall be implemented by the District's Board of Trustees or such other person or persons as may be authorized to act for and on behalf of the Board to effect the dissolution of the District's status and affairs.
2. The District's Board of Trustees, officers, or agents shall file any and all documents of dissolution with appropriate federal, state, and local government authorities.
3. The District's Board of Trustees, officers, or agents shall, as soon as practicable following dissolution, return, transfer, and convey any and all of the District's property to the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (a nonprofit religious corporation) and shall execute any deeds or other documents necessary or appropriate to effect such return, transfer, or conveyance.
4. The District's Board of Trustees, officers, or agents shall, as soon as practicable following dissolution, distribute the remaining assets of the District, after providing for the payment or settlement of all valid debts or claims against the District, to the Unitarian Universalist Association (a nonprofit religious corporation).
5. The District's Board of Trustees, officers, or agents shall pay all such fees and taxes and do or cause to be done such other acts and things as they may deem necessary or proper in order to carry out the dissolution of the District's status and affairs.

**Southern Region UUA
Proposed Budget
July 2015 - June 2016**

| | 2014-2015 Budget | 2015-2016 Proposed Budget |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Income | | |
| GIFT | 574,483 | 570,000 |
| UUA APF Grant | 137,624 | 130,000 |
| UUA APF Shared Staffing | 349,047 | 357,000 |
| Program Fees & Registrations | 150,000 | 150,000 |
| Congregational Consulting | 6,000 | 7,500 |
| Interest/Investment | 1,000 | 0 |
| Donations | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| Total Income | \$1,219,154 | \$1,215,500 |
| Expenses | | |
| Administrative | 12,400 | 9,500 |
| Equipment & Maintenance | 4,628 | 3,000 |
| Insurance | 6,000 | 0 |
| Telecommunications | 10,000 | 10,000 |
| Bookkeeping, Technical & Web Services | 52,700 | 25,000 |
| Audit & Professional Services | 7,000 | 10,000 |
| Board, Governance & Transition/Legal | 30,600 | 5,000 |
| Stewardship | 2,000 | 0 |
| Admin Salaries, Benefits & Payroll Expense | 146,214 | 150,000 |
| Congregational Life Salaries & Benefits | 663,313 | 675,000 |
| Admin Professional Expense | 10,000 | 12,000 |
| Congregational Life Professional Expense | 105,000 | 105,000 |
| District Workshops & Programs | 125,000 | 150,000 |
| Program & Committee Expenses | 9,000 | 21,000 |
| Gifts & Caring, Program Grants | 5,100 | 7,000 |
| Congregational Peer Consulting | 30,199 | 33,000 |
| Total Expenses | \$1,219,154 | \$1,215,500 |
| Net Income | \$0 | \$0 |

**MidSouth District
Leadership Development Committee
2014-2015 Annual Report
March 17, 2015**

Nominations for the MidSouth District Board of Trustees

If elected, the following three people will join 2014-2016 President DeAnn Peterson (UUCA, GA) and 2014-2016 Vice President Jill Austin (Murfreesboro, TN) to form the 2015-2016 MSD Board.

Secretary (Two-year term, 2015-2017): Jim Becker, Jackson, MS

Treasurer (Two-year term, 2015-2017): Karen Croneis, Tuscaloosa, AL

Relationship Trustee (Two-year term, 2015-2017): Nathalie Bigord, Lawrenceville, GA

Nominations for the MSD Leadership Development Committee

If elected, the following two people will join 2014-2016 Member and 2015-2016 Chair Gail Sphar (Nashville, TN) to form the 2015-2016 Leadership Development Committee (LDC).

Leadership Development Committee (One-year term, 2015-2016): Kirk Bogue, UUMAN, GA

Leadership Development Committee (Two-year term, 2015-2017): June Bryant, Macon, GA

Respectfully submitted,
2014-2015 Leadership Development Committee
Gail Sphar, Jim Becker, and Karen Croneis (Chair)

Biographies of Nominees

Jim Becker - Nominee for MSD Secretary, 2015-2017

Jim has served in many roles at the UU Church of Jackson and is currently Vice President, Religious Education. A guest speaker at Mississippi congregations and a spokesperson for the LGBTQ community, Jim is on the steering committee of the Mississippi Cluster of UU Congregations which organizes annual events statewide. He is currently recording secretary on the Board of Trustees for The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, North Carolina.

Jim has always been one who treasures and values diversity which is why he remains loyal to our Unitarian Universalist values and faith journey. Jim and his spouse, Freeman Bennett, celebrate their 25th anniversary this year. Their two Chi-babies keep them very busy and, as Jim freely admits, actually run their lives. Having previously served as MSD Board secretary, Jim is a member of the Leadership Development Committee.

Karen Croneis - Nominee for MSD Treasurer, 2015-2017

Karen is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Tuscaloosa (AL) where she is assistant treasurer and past chair of the Board and the Stewardship Committee. In Unitarian Universalism, she found a faith that she could wholeheartedly embrace. Growing up on a farm, she has always known and been a part of the interdependent web. As recent retiree, Karen enjoys being able to read fiction in the middle of the afternoon.

Nathalie Bigord - Nominee for MSD Relationship Trustee, 2015-2017

Nathalie was born and raised in Haiti until the age of 9 when she moved to New York. Her experience of being raised in a very diverse city surrounded by kindhearted people of all walks of life and religious/spiritual beliefs sparked her desire to find a liberal and inclusive faith home when she moved to Georgia in 2008. Nathalie found that at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Gwinnett where she has served on the Board of Trustees and numerous committees. She currently serves as the Relationship Trustee on the MSD Board. Nathalie volunteers at the county animal shelter. She enjoys reading, spending time out in nature and with her dog, and, if time permits, sleeping.

Kirk Bogue - Nominee for MSD Leadership Development Committee, 2015-2016

Kirk is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North Congregation (UUMAN) in Roswell, Georgia, where he serves as Treasurer and has previously served as President and leader of various committees. Kirk is a past President and Vice President of the Mid-South District Board of Trustees. Kirk appreciates that our faith can be life saving and that working together, Unitarian Universalists can change the world. By day, Kirk is a member of the executive team at ClearStar, a growing technology company in north Atlanta.

June Bryant - Nominee for MSD Leadership Development Committee, 2015-2017

June has held every leadership position at High Street UU Church--and some more than once! She has served the MidSouth District in many capacities, including as TEACH Trustee on the MSD Board, on the Leadership Development Committee, and, most recently, with her spouse Chet Strunk as Chalice Lighter Committee Chairs. Of Unitarian Universalism, June says that it is a blessing to be a member of a group that continues to draw the circle ever wider. June volunteers with DAYBREAK, an interfaith-sponsored day shelter for the homeless in Macon, GA.